CONTRA THESIS

In unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam

The Project

We have created this project: ***Contra-Thesis*** in order to reject and resist adherence to the Thesis of Cassiciacum. We believe that it is false, a danger to the Catholic Faith, and a hindrance to the Church in her mission. We have therefore created this project to first demonstrate the intellectual errors of the Thesis, and then to call upon the faithful to join in their rejection of it. Our intentions are explained more in our Open Letter, and the full refutation of the Thesis of Cassiciacum can be found under: The Argument.

Sedes Sapientiae Fidelium is an organisation of Catholic laymen from all over the world. We have come together in our united purpose to uphold the Catholic Faith, and to support and strengthen the Church. In particular, we are united in a focused effort against the Thesis of Cassiciacum and its various forms as a wide-spread error amongst renaming, faithful Catholics.

We have chosen our name to give veneration to our most Blessed Lady: the Virgin Mary, who we pray to for guidance and protection, and to whom we commend this project to. Moreover, this name indicates our interest with the seats (sedes) of the Catholic Church, which there is currently so much contention over.

Open Letter

To the Priests and Bishops of the Holy Catholic Church,

Foremost we commend, support and encourage you in your continued rejection of the evil, anti-Catholic teachings that have been spawned from the Second Vatican Council and the new imposter religion that it has created which is not only anathema to the Catholic Faith, but must be passionately and decisively rejected by every member of the Catholic Church.

It is in the spirit of such a conclusion that we write this letter because evil, including error, must be rejected entirely, and the conclusion you have embraced in most of its parts must be complete. It is not enough to recognise that we are dealing with a new imposter religion, but we must also recognise that this new imposter religion has therefore been embraced and spread by a new, imposter church.

Unless this conclusion is fully embraced, the very identity of the Church remains fractured and confused in the minds of men; such will claim the Church to be Holy and Apostolic, but must conclude that she is neither Unified nor truly Catholic if the damnable errors and heresies of a new religion can be preached from Her offices. Unless this conclusion is fully embraced, we will continue to be pacified, as we wait for the Church to be healed, not by her members, but by her most mortal enemies… and unless this conclusion is fully embraced, those who would attempt to fight against this great evil will remain weakened and fractured in their efforts, the ranks of the faithful being soaked through with division and confusion...

It is for reasons such as these that it is absolutely necessary to reject the Thesis of Cassiciacum, whether in its original form, or – more pertinently – in the form widely advocated for in our current state. **The materials we present demonstrate that the Thesis is utterly erroneous and untenable and thus incompatible with truth, and anathema to a rational mind.** Whilst this error is held to, it only gives our enemies more strength; divides what should be a united front, and delays the proper efforts we must make to fight against evil.

It is for reasons such as these that we have chosen to organise in rejection of the Thesis, and call upon you to do the same.

We first call upon all clergy who currently reject the Thesis: if you do so privately, we invite you to do so more publicly; if you already reject it publicly, we call upon you to do it more energetically. Know that you will have our continued support. Whilst advocacy for the Thesis is organised with concentrated effort, we know that rejection of it has not enjoyed this same kind of cohesion. We now hope to change this. The Thesis may have been proclaimed with the louder voice, but rejection of it, or at least resistance to it, is in fact the norm amongst the faithful Catholics of our day. We therefore hope that we may help to to give further voice to this.

We then call upon all clergy who have embraced the Thesis. We call upon you to let go of your adherence to it. Firstly, to stop teaching it to your lay-faithful; secondly, to stop requiring it of fellow clergy, and finally, to simply reject it and resist it for the error that it is. We understand why you have adhered to it. There may be a variety of reasons, from the character of its original author to the apparent reasonableness of its argument. At first, it seems to you to solve a problem that cannot otherwise be solved in a manner that appears to flow from sound principles and theology. However, you will find upon further analysis that this is simply illusory. If we examine the arguments and apparent proofs for what they are, they are revealed, ultimately, to be empty and false. We therefore call upon you to turn against the Thesis. We call upon you to accept that whatever commitments you may have made to it, personally, publicly, or as entire organisations, these commitments are but nothing should they stand against truth, and if your commitment is to the service of Holy Mother Church, we call upon you to withdraw this thorn from her, regardless of the intentions with which it was placed there.

Some may argue that such a letter as this and such a project as the one we are undertaking is heavy-handed and imprudent, arguing that we should prioritise peace, especially in these chaotic times. To this we answer that it is precisely because we are suffering through these chaotic times that we ought to be zealous in our rejection of error, even if this comes at the cost of so-called “peace”. After all, whilst the Church values peace in the spirit of Our Lord who is the most Holy Prince of Peace Himself, the only true peace comes when Good is united with Good, and Truth is united

with Truth. There is no peace between truth and falsehood. It is a ready tactic of the enemy to call for “peace” to lull resistance against him. Thus, when we are faced with falsehood, it is not time to bring peace, but a sword; once the falsehood is cleanly divided from the truth, the Church Militant can enjoy the true peace of unity which makes us strong in our faith.

Finally, we cannot simply wait for a new pope to resolve this matter, as some might suggest. After all, this discussion is about the very way in which a new, valid pope may be elected. Given that adherence to the Thesis is one such thing that delays the next valid election, to say that we must simply tolerate the Thesis until a new pope declares it false is in fact to lock the Thesis into perpetuity; whether consciously or not, it as an attempt to make the error insoluble. Thus, we answer that we cannot wait for a pope to resolve this issue. The faithful have a duty to reject it, and to remove this obstacle from the path of the Church.

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In sum, we call upon all Priests and Bishops of the Catholic Church to resist and reject the Thesis of Cassiciacum in any of its forms. All are invited to read our materials and others we have compiled, which show that the arguments presented for the Thesis are demonstrably void, irrational, baseless, and false. We will proceed to argue against the Thesis, and do so internationally.

To all who already reject the Thesis, we implore you to now go further in your efforts, and to those who embrace it, we call upon you to forego this error. To all laity, we likewise call upon you to resist it, amongst one-another and when it is presented by your teachers. It does no good to any of us, anywhere, to either passively accept of passively tolerate this error amongst us.

Instead, we state very clearly and definitively: ***Sede Vacante!*** There is currently no reigning pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church, and we have no Roman Pontiff *in any sense*, whether that be merely “material”, “elected” or otherwise. This conclusion is indeed dire as we have suffered a long interregnum. Yet, it is something that we must also accept and teach: at the Second Vatican Council we saw the public promulgation of a new, non-Catholic religion. The Novus Ordo religion is not only a new, anti-Catholic

religion, but therefore the Novus Ordo church is a new, non-Catholic church; it does not hold the Faith of the Church, *nor* Her structures... it is a charade; a lie; an imposter; a costume worn by the devil, giving himself the name “Catholic” in order to deceive the world, and to truly be a wolf in shepherd’s clothing. This does not of course mean that all sheep that have been led away by this most evil shepherd have no Catholicism in them, and Our Lord sees in their cries and confusions which hearts are calling out to Him. Nonetheless, they call out to what is beyond the claws of the wolf, and if we are to serve those whomever would want to be Catholic, we do not serve them by insisting that the new, counter-religion is promulgated from the offices of Holy Mother Church. Instead, we need to state clearly and definitively that Holy Mother Church is beyond this counter-church and its counter-religion, so that all of the faithful may rightly be called home.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary pray for us, guide us, and protect us.

In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

- *Sedes Sapientiae Fidelium*

The Argument

Page Introduction

On this page you will find our full refutation of the Thesis of Cassiciacum. Scroll down to read the argument in its entirety.

You are of course invited to read the argument from the beginning, but we understand that many who are already familiar with the argument (on both sides) would like to focus on particular parts of it. To do this, simply select the section you want from the contents list.

Note: references/footnotes are used throughout the work, and on this online version, they are found at the end of each individual section.

We have also ensured that the argument can be downloaded in both **.pdf** and **.epub** formats. Simply click the download links below:

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Contra-Thesis:

A refutation of the Cassiciacum Thesis as presented by its modern advocates

In Two Parts

The first part being the core refutation argument

The second part being a collection of additional arguments

Overview

Introduction

Firstly, a brief message to all such nay-sayers; apostates, heretics, and schismatics of the Novus Ordo counter church, so-called “Eastern-Orthodox”, under the many guises of “Protestant”, or otherwise: that this does not break the Mark of Unity amongst Catholics because, however serious the disagreement may be, it is over a conclusion, not a defined doctrine. As such, it does not constitute a break of Unity. If you claim that it does, you are invited to consult authoritative Catholic works on the matter, not your own heretical works (including those of the Novus Ordo counter-church).

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The following is a presentation of a two-part refutation of the *Thesis of Cassiciacum*, as presented by its modern day advocates.

We here state “by its modern day advocates” because these refutations do not focus on the original thesis written by Bishop Michel-Louis Guérard des Lauriers. Instead, they focus on the current works that purport to explain, share, and generally encourage adherence to the thesis for global, faithful Catholics. Upon writing this current work (in 2025), the original thesis of Bishop Guérard des Lauriers has not been translated, and remains solely in French (and has therefore not been widely circulated). However, the works of its proponents have been written in multiple languages, and are widely circulated and promoted.

Also, we do not therefore attempt to support or encourage the original thesis, either. Instead, we see the matter as such: to the extent that the modern advocates have correctly presented the thesis, this must show that the original thesis was either untenable in its time, or certainly untenable now and into the future. If the argument is that of its global proponents, including the entire organisations which have dedicated themselves to its adherence, none have faithfully represented it, we

would have to take the level of this confusion and error to be its own denouncement of the issue. Finally, we take the original thesis to be irrelevant to the current discussion, given that our focus is upon that which is widely circulated.

Therefore, whenever we refer to the *Thesis of Cassiciacum* (from hence, simply called "**the Thesis**"), we refer to it in the context of being presented and promoted by its modern advocates (from hence, simply called "**Thesis advocates**"), following the time of Bishop Guérard des Lauriers.

The first and most pressing question, of course, is why we have chosen to produce this public refutation. The answer is because it is a Catholic duty to resist error, and the more public and energetic the error becomes, the more public and energetic must be its rejection. In recent years, promotion of the Thesis has become more and more apparent across the world. Those who advocate for it have done so with increasing vigour. The two most prominent organisations in question are the RCI ("Roman Catholic Institute"), with its headquarters in the USA, operating globally; and the IMBC ("Istituto Mater Boni Consilii"), with its headquarters in Italy, operating principally throughout Europe. Both of these organisations have released various publications on the Thesis, the former having recently produced an entire website to its explication, and defence: thethesis.us, which is the most extensive collected work on the Thesis to date. Moreover, both institutions make adherence to the Thesis necessary for their clergy, and teach the Thesis to their lay congregations as a matter of course. Therefore, in these two organisations alone, adherence to and promotion of the Thesis is ever increasing amongst clergy and laity alike.

Nonetheless, we do not here propose this refutation as an assault on these organisations and all their members as-such. After all, adherence to the Thesis is not confined to these organisations, and we seek to focus on the Thesis as an erroneous idea. We encourage all clergy and laity to reject the Thesis, including these organisations, and if the Thesis has been made part of the constitution of their organisations, this need not be a necessity.

At this juncture it is appropriate to address the fact that this refutation is principally a lay-project in conflict with a body of works which are

(primarily) done by clergy. Now, it must be immediately recognised that this does not therefore entail that “Thesis versus non-Thesis” can be regarded as “clergy versus laity”. Whilst the Thesis works we address are mostly written by clergy, support for the Thesis is not reducible to the clergy. Moreover, not all clergy accept the Thesis. We cannot even say that it is a majority of Catholic clergy who accept it. Even if there is not yet more vocal and energetic denouncement of the Thesis, the number of clergy who simply do not accept it remains high.

Nonetheless, we return to the fact that this project itself is a lay-project. If such is regarded as imprudent, we answer that it is a Catholic duty for all Catholics to resist error wherever they may find it. This intellectual work is not confined to the clergy alone. Moreover, not all clergy are to be regarded as infallible in all of their operations. The clergy of the Catholic Church (particularly a legitimate pope in tandem with his bishops) can exercise infallibility when defining doctrines. However, in our current situation we have no valid pope, and the Thesis advocates will openly admit that the Thesis argument does not qualify as a doctrine. Instead, it is simply what it is: a thesis. Indeed, it is a novel idea which, as we will see, is deeply erroneous.

Therefore, we proceed following such precepts described by St. Thomas Aquinas:

> “It must be observed... that **if the faith were endangered, a subject ought to rebuke his prelate even publicly**. Hence Paul, who was Peter's subject, rebuked him in public, on account of the imminent danger of scandal concerning faith, and, as the gloss of Augustine says on Galatians 2:11, "Peter gave an example to superiors, **that if at any time they should happen to stray from the straight path, they should not disdain to be reproved by their subjects**.”1

However, whilst this work is being written in response to works that are primarily written by clergy, the clergy are not our only audience. This work is written for an audience of both clergy and laymen. Therefore, the language in it is selected as such, not addressing any particular individual or clergyman as-such. We would also like to emphasise that if the arguments in this document are taken as antagonistic, they are antagonistic against ideas qua ideas, not against persons qua persons.2

We have decided to structure this refutation in two parts.

The first part is the Core refutation. The goal of this section is to provide a relatively concise refutation against the Thesis argument based upon core principles. It does this by demonstrating that the Thesis is at once illogical, unnecessary, and self-defeating. We thereby believe that this Core Refutation alone should suffice to demonstrate that the Thesis is deeply erroneous and ought to be rejected.

The second part is the Additional Arguments. To keep the core argument concise, there were many additional arguments and considerations that we could not sufficiently explore. Whilst we hold that these additional considerations have not been essential to address in order for the core argument to maintain its force, we nonetheless understand that many will be unsatisfied due to a number of lingering arguments. Therefore, we have decided to compile such arguments in the second part. Usually, such additions will refer directly back to the core argument in some way, or lead directly on from it. In some cases, the additional arguments will stand alone, addressing peripheral issues.

1 St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, 2.2 Q.33 (emphasis added)
2 This pertains particularly to this document. If it ever becomes necessary to publicly address a particular person individually, that will be done elsewhere, and under a different publication, with an approach which is appropriate for a distinct work of its kind.

Dangers of the Thesis

The primary motive for writing this refutation of the Thesis is that it is a serious error, which presents many dangers, both conceptual and practical. We will here review three key dangers to give the reader some sense of the gravity of the matter.

i) The Thesis Creates the Potential to be re-led by Wolves.

The Thesis does not clearly outline the exact criteria for how to recognise when a pope has manifested the intention to accept the papacy. The Thesis rests on the argument that a pope (or quasi-pope in this case) can be rejected when he manifests mal-intention; when he does not act and

teach publicly in a way that shows he is willing to lead the faithful correctly and lead his church which, according to the Thesis, means that he does not accept the papacy. Without addressing the problems with this argument, we are at present concerned with what it entails: if we must reject a quasi-pope based on bad intention, when can we recognise good intention?

Some Thesis supporters have mentioned that this would require a wholesale rejection of The Second Vatican Council, along with all of its teachings, and reforms. In sum, to do away with the Novus Ordo religion completely. The practical problem with this is that a particular false-pope could easily say that he intends to do all of these things, without actually doing them. A full revocation of Vatican II would require this hypothetical quasi-pope to perform many thorough, public, and ecclesiastical acts such as writing many detailed encyclicals and calling a council. Indeed, according to the logic of the Thesis itself, it would not be definitively proven that this quasi-pope had either become (or always was) a real pope until after these public acts were performed.

This leaves a lot of room open for confusion and misdirection. For many, it would seem both right and natural to conclude that good intention is shown when the quasi-pope makes his first statements doubting Vatican II. After all, the idea that “good intention” would be proven by a full revocation of Vatican II is just one idea posited by some Thesis supporters, but it is nowhere stated explicitly and definitively. The only explicit idea is that of manifesting “good intention”, and given that “good intention” is something open to interpretation, it is a perfect tool for Satanic deceivers to abuse.

If the Thesis is accepted it is therefore far easier for a Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing to mislead Catholics and keep them hypnotised in a false-hope under the Novus Ordo church by manifesting instances of “good intention” amongst its clergy. This would either:

- Delay a proper acceptance of the situation (and delay the correct Catholic response), or
- Lead to instances of wholesale re-acceptance of the Novus Ordo clergy when they reach an apparently satisfactory *appearance* of “traditional” and “conservative” Catholicism.

ii) The Thesis creates a passive block to the true election of a new pope.

As we will see, The Thesis rests partly on the claim that it offers the only viable option for explaining the continuation of the hierarchy and the papacy. As we will also see, this is false. It is at least possible (although highly difficult) for the remaining Catholic clergy to come together in council to elect a new pope.

However, given that this option requires the clergy to cooperate, acceptance of the Thesis blocks this solution because insofar as clergy adhere to the Thesis, they will conclude that such a council and election is impossible, and therefore not cooperate in it.

Therefore, the Thesis not only makes the false claim that such a council is impossible, but adherence to the Thesis is itself something that makes it impossible.

A connected problem is that **the Thesis pacifies the faithful.**

After all, once clergy adhere to the Thesis, their only recommendation for remedying the current crisis is to pray and wait (for the Novus Ordo clergy to convert). However, if the Thesis is wrong, ardent prayer must be combined with passionate, concerted activity on behalf of the remaining faithful in order to combat the Satanic imposter-church. **Hence, whilst the Thesis has sway, the enemies of the Church have more opportunity to strengthen their position.**

iii) The Thesis compromises the Identity of The Church.

Therefore, the Thesis is a danger to The Faith.

The Thesis and its proponents argue that the Novus Ordo religion is indeed a new, anti-Catholic religion which is anathema to The Faith. It also argues that public adherents to this new religion still constitute the Catholic Church. That is to say, that members of The Catholic Church publicly (and systematically) profess and teach a non-Catholic religion, whilst occupying its offices. It also argues that, whilst holding these offices, these adherents to a non-Catholic religion still exercise legitimate,

legal functions within the Church (i.e. elections). Therefore, it creates a novel separation between the Catholic Church and the Catholic Religion. This is done by emphasising the Church as a legal entity, and leads to the conclusion that the Catholic Church does not necessarily need to hold the Catholic religion, as if it is substantially a legal entity, and only accidentality a religious one (whereas in fact it is only legal *insofar as it can serve its religious-spiritual function*). In sum, this is contrary to The Church's divine nature, and contrary to our fundamental understanding of The Church's identity as Catholics.

Also, the Thesis rejects and fractures the Four Marks of The Church.

The Four Marks of The Church are: Apostolicity, Catholicity, Unity, and Holiness.

The Thesis maintains that the Novus Ordo church is The Catholic Church. It maintains that it is Apostolic; indeed, this is a necessary part of the Thesis argument because it insists that legal, Apostolic succession must be continued through the Novus Ordo hierarchy.

However, the Thesis and its adherents do not (and indeed cannot) claim that the Novus Ordo church is truly Catholic (if it does not hold the Catholic faith), nor can they claim that it is One (unified), or Holy. Indeed, these are all reasons why they reject the Novus Ordo religion. Therefore, the Thesis leads to the conclusion that the Catholic Church lacks three of its four identifying marks.

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Thus, we see that these three dangers alone are of sufficient gravity to resist the Thesis. Other dangers are present, but it is clear that when we consider just these three; adherence to the Thesis strengthens the enemies of the Church, makes the remaining faithful more vulnerable to the influence of wolves, pacifies positive efforts towards a solution, and ultimately compromises The Faith. Error should be resisted at all times, and serious public error even more so. Given that we are currently living through a great crisis assailing the Catholic Church, it is of paramount importance that we minimise error and confusion so that Catholics can remain strong in their mission.

Thesis Sources

Given that the modern Thesis argument is not wholly monolithic, readers might wonder which documents we have examined. We reviewed numerous publications by Thesis advocates which, whilst being published by various individuals from a variety of organisations, nonetheless have a tendency towards mutual reference; that is to say, the references we examined often worked together, sometimes implicitly, at other times explicitly so. Therefore, it has been evident that despite the apparent separation of some of these sources, they broadly constitute a collective argument. We will here mention a few, key sources that we have examined and that have informed our view of what the Thesis argument is; that is to say, the sources which constitute the argument that our work refutes.

The first and foremost of these sources has been the Thesis website published by the RCI:

- *thethesis.us (2025)*

This is the most extensive work on the Thesis, spread over thirteen chapters, including additional articles and resources.
We have also consulted numerous works by the head of the RCI, and public advocate of the Thesis, Bishop Donald Sanborn, including:

- *Bp. Donald Sanborn, On Being a Pope Materially, and*
- *Bp. Sanborn, Explanation of the Thesis of Bishop Guérard des Lauriers*

The IMBC has done less extensive work, which nonetheless harmonises with the work of the RCI. One particular work of note from the IMBC has been from one of its head clerics:

- *Rev. Francesco Ricossa, The Election of the Pope (Sodalitium extract n ° 54 and n ° 55)*

Another key article that we examined is often circulated by Thesis advocates:

- *Fr. Bernard Lucien, The Problem of Authority in the Post-Conciliar Church: The Cassiciacum Thesis*

We invite readers to read these sources to check whether we are providing a fair representation of the Thesis position. We have also

examined and referred to other sources, which are shown in the body of our work.

Part 1

The Core Argument

Core refutation of the Cassiciacum Thesis as presented by its modern advocates

Introduction

In this first part we will present the *Core* Argument or *Core* Refutation against the Thesis.

The Thesis is a novelty; a new idea proposed in response to the current crisis, but not found anywhere in the annals of Catholic thought. Instead, it attempts to draw upon various threads of Catholic thinking to justify itself. This alone does not disqualify the Thesis, but it nonetheless makes it prudent to guard against it from the outset.

Yet, the Thesis and the extended Thesis arguments are detailed and extensive works written by Catholic clergymen, with reference to many Catholic theologians and thinkers, and thus perhaps it would be rash to dismiss them out of turn without further examination…

We answer that upon further examination, the Thesis arguments show themselves to be completely and utterly untenable and incompatible with Catholic thought and human reason.

The goal, therefore, is to demonstrate this. The Thesis works are extensive, and thus there is much to say in order to address every

individual claim its advocates make in all their details. However, we do not regard this as necessary. Like most systems of error, however extensive, it is not necessary to address every single error, but to show that there are sufficient errors of principle which invalidate the entire system. **Such errors are the focus of this first part…**

We therefore present this as the "core" argument because it is at once the core of our refutation, and addresses the core principles of the Thesis works. **We believe that this first part alone is sufficient to completely invalidate the Thesis argument and to demonstrate that it ought to be rejected by every faithful Catholic.**

Our presentation will progress like so:

First, we will provide a summary of the Thesis; a condensed form of the argument in all of its key principles (if anyone wonders if we have not faithfully re-produced the Thesis argument, they are invited to check according to the Thesis works themselves).

Second, we will demonstrate that the Thesis is illogical; that it is say, that it invalidates itself according to its own logic, and that it is rationally baseless. As such, we will demonstrate from the outset that even if no other argument were made, *an appeal to the Thesis according to its very own principles would be enough to invalidate it as an argument.*

Third, we will nonetheless proceed to show how a keystone concept of the Thesis: that of a "material" pope is a sheer impossibility. This will thereby demonstrate that the entire Thesis argument is untenable because it invokes a core concept or argument which is nonsensical.

Fourth, only at this point will we turn to the major, "external" argument made against the Thesis, meaning the main argument that does not attack the Thesis according to Thesis principles: that is, the argument from heresy. In this section, we will demonstrate that, despite the arguments of Thesis advocates, this argument from heresy nonetheless serves as a definitive refutation of their argument.

Fifth, we will address the last, lingering claim of the Thesis: that it is a necessity, and stands as the only possible solution presented for our

current problem. This will shown to be false by demonstrating that alternative solutions do indeed exist, and thus the claim of necessity is simply void.

Finally, we will conclude by re-emphasising the dangers of the Thesis, with a call to all Catholics to reject it because it is utterly erroneous; not only does it entail all such dangers, but as an argument it is void, baseless, self-defeating, unnecessary, and built upon impossible principles.

As has been mentioned, all additional and complimentary arguments, whether referred to or not, will be compiled in *Part 2.*

1. A Summary of The Thesis

The Thesis begins with the dogmatic truth that the Church must have Apostolic succession, including succession in the legal order. That is to say, the legal element of the Church must always remain perpetually. In particular, the office of the Papacy, being the principal office of Jurisdiction, must always remain, and even if it may not be constantly occupied by a pope, the Church must at least maintain the potential to fill the Papal office; i.e. to elect a new pope.

The problem we have in the current situation is that since the time of the Second Vatican Council, the hierarchy of what appears to most to be the “Catholic” church publicly professes a new religion. This new religion is being professed by clerics of all levels, including “cardinals” and “popes”. It therefore follows that these men cannot hold any authority in the Catholic Church. However, the problem is: if the “cardinals” and “popes” do not hold any authority, or if we cannot truly regard them as popes, how does Apostolic succession continue within the Church?

The Thesis solution to this problem is to posit that we do not currently have a pope, but that there is an individual who has received a “legitimate election”, and therefore constitutes the “ultimate matter” of the Papacy. However, he is not a pope because he has not manifested the correct intention to receive the Papacy; that is to say, he has not manifested the right intention to lead the Catholic Church and teach the Catholic faith. This is the “material” pope (not a “formal” pope). He is also called the

“pope-elect” because he has received an election but is legally within an interim between being elected and truly “accepting” the election by having the “right intention”, at which point he will receive the full authority of supreme jurisdiction.

Before such a time, this “material” pope or “pope-elect” does not hold the Papal office. Nonetheless, he maintains the ability to elect cardinals. The cardinals publicly profess the new faith of a new religion and are also not to be regarded as having any authority. Nonetheless, they also have the power to perform a “valid election” for a new pope (to produce or designate a “material” pope).

Despite lacking authority and not holding Papal office, the Thesis claims that the “material” pope nonetheless maintains the power to elect cardinals because cardinals are necessary for a Papal election, and the potential for a Papal election is necessary to maintain Apostolic succession. Therefore, this “material” pope does not hold an office and therefore does not enjoy any authority on account of that office. However, this individual nonetheless maintains the power to appoint cardinals and the authority to do so is supplied to him directly by God. Likewise, the cardinals lack authority but receive the power to elect a pope directly from God. Therefore, the “material” pope will have the ability to appoint cardinals who, in turn, will have the ability to perform an election until such a time that one of these “pope-elects” manifests the “right intention” and becomes a true pope.

This process is cyclical. The Thesis has been used to explain the course of multiple elections, from the time of the Second Vatican Council until the present day. Since that time, we have had multiple “material” popes.

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We will show that this argument is false. Whilst it is true that the Church must (and does) enjoy perpetual Apostolic succession, we will see that advocates falsely present the Thesis as the only possible solution to our current problem; and that this non-solution is void, baseless, circular, illogical, unsupported by history, and formed through a misuse of language.

2. The Thesis is Void, Baseless, and Circular

We will here demonstrate that the Thesis is false and worthy of rejection because it is a self-defeating argument which defies its own logic, and is ultimately supported by nothing except for its own baseless insistence on false claims. That is to say; the Thesis is false because it is void, baseless, and circular. As such, it can be disproven in reference to nothing else except for its own logic. No conflict need be raised between the Thesis and any other "external" argument. Instead, the Thesis need only be presented against itself. This is what we will show in this present section.

We will show that it is void because some core principles it invokes come into necessary conflict with its other principles – therefore causing the Thesis logic to deny itself. We will show that it is baseless and circular because the Thesis advocates present a model as "necessary", the ultimate justification for which is the principle that the model *must* be necessary – and this circular argument is baseless because, in the final analysis, the claim which the entire Thesis model is built upon as "necessary" is in fact not necessary at all. Hence, there is no firm foundation under the Thesis model.

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a) The Thesis is Void

The Thesis is void because its insistence upon the need for cardinals to elect a pope leads to the conclusion that the Thesis is necessarily self-defeating. This is proven by the fact that the Thesis leads to at least two dilemmas, both of which force the Thesis to deny itself, and for its advocates to contradict their principles.

First Dilemma

To understand this dilemma, let us review two key principles that the Thesis is based upon...

First: That there is no reigning pope with supreme authority (and there has not been since the time of the Second Vatican Council):

> "The Thesis agrees with total sedevacantism (sometimes called "totalism") in saying that the Vatican II popes are not true popes… Therefore, either they are not popes, or the Church has defected. Since the Catholic faith forbids us from professing the latter, the former must be true."1

> "The Thesis says that the "Vatican II popes" are not formally popes, that is, they are not really popes and have **no** authority."2

Second: That we must believe that cardinals are the only valid electors of the pope because these were the last legal provisions laid down by Pope Pius XII:

> "Is the College of Cardinals the only body that can validly elect the pope?
> Yes, the College of Cardinals is the only body that can validly elect the pope. Pope Pius XII, echoing his predecessors, affirms that "the right to elect the Roman Pontiff belongs solely and exclusively to the Cardinals.""3

It is worth noting that this quote of Pius XII is misrepresented, here. The way that it is translated and framed is misleading, but we will deal with that issue elsewhere.4 For now, we will simply take the insistence of Thesis advocates that we ought to follow the rules of election proposed by Pope Pius XII (and no other).

Therefore, the Thesis advocates claim that the "Vatican II popes" have held no authority, and that we must adhere to the rules of election given by Pope Pius XII.

However, the "Vatican II popes" have changed the rules of election. To begin with, they have changed the number of cardinals. In the time of Pope Pius XII, the number of cardinals was limited to 70, as shown in the Code of Canon Law:

> "The Sacred College [of Cardinals] is divided into three orders: episcopal, to which belong only those **six** Cardinals over the various suburbicarian dioceses; presbyteral, which consists of **fifty** Cardinals; and diaconal, which [consists of] **fourteen** [Cardinals]."5

As of today, the Novus Ordo church has over 200 "cardinals", of whom more than 120 are "electors"6. Therefore, if only 70 cardinals could have a legitimate vote according to Pope Pius XII, we cannot determine which of the 200 or 120 "cardinals" can have a legitimate vote in present "elections". Moreover, multiple "reforms" were made to the election process by the "Vatican II popes".7 Therefore, according to the logic of the Thesis, we are presented with two options:

a) the legal changes after Vatican II have been valid and ought to be followed, or

b) the legal changes after Vatican II have not been valid and we must keep solely to the laws made prior.

However, if a) is true and the changes have been valid, then we must conclude that the "Vatican II popes" have possessed true, Papal authority, such that they have been able to make legitimate, legal changes to laws and election processes,

And, if b) is true and the changes have been invalid, then we must conclude that the elections themselves have been invalid because they have followed invalid rules.

Therefore, this is the dilemma: the Thesis either requires us to conclude that the "Vatican II popes" have in fact enjoyed legitimate, Papal authority and have been able to legally change the rules of election (which would invalidate the Thesis), or we must conclude that they did not have this power, and therefore the "cardinals" have been performing invalid elections (which would invalidate the Thesis).

There is a possibility that an attempt will be made to invoke the idea of convalidation because Thesis advocates make very brief reference to it in

one of their articles. This is a principle which is applied to marriage (not elections), but Thesis advocates might nonetheless try to extend the principle to elections, by claiming that universal acceptance would render the election valid. In a separate article, we will show how this argument does not follow.8

Second Dilemma

To understand this second dilemma, let us consider one more key belief of Thesis advocates: that the Novus Ordo clergy do not hold valid orders:

> "The Novus Ordo religion has invalidated or made doubtful every sacrament... it has invalidated the consecration of bishops, which in turn invalidates the sacrament of Holy Orders,"9

> "[A "re-evaluation"] has been applied to the new rite of episcopal ordination, issued by Paul VI in 1968… and the new formula ought to be regarded as invalid."10

And we have already established that the Thesis advocates claim that the "Vatican II popes" have not been Roman Pontiffs.

Now, let us consider the definition of a cardinal, according to Canon Law:

> "Cardinals are men freely selected by the **Roman Pontiff** from throughout the whole world who are **at least constituted in the presbyteral order** [and who] are notably outstanding for their doctrine, piety, and prudence in conducting affairs."11

Therefore, cardinals are selected by the *Roman Pontiff*, and are at least constituted in the presbyteral order; that it to say, *they are at least ordained as priests.*12

However, according to Thesis advocates, the Novus Ordo clergy, including the "cardinals", do not have valid orders. Nor has there been a Roman Pontiff.

Therefore, the dilemma is this: if Thesis advocates insist that these "cardinals" have been valid cardinals performing valid elections,

they must conclude either that valid orders are not necessary for being a cardinal, or that non-cardinals can perform elections (against Canon Law). Likewise, they must either conclude that the selection of cardinals can be done by someone other than the Roman Pontiff (against Canon Law), or they must conclude that the "Vatican II popes" have been Roman Pontiffs, which would invalidate their argument.

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Therefore, the Thesis is void. On these two points alone it is clearly demonstrable, according to the very same principles that Thesis advocates invoke. To maintain their argument, they must also invalidate their argument; whilst claiming that there have been valid elections, they must also claim that elections can be done by invalid electors following invalid rules; whilst claiming that we must follow the rules of Pope Pius XII, they must also claim that these rules can be overturned; and whilst claiming that the "Vatican II popes" have had no authority, they must also claim that they have exercised the authority of Roman Pontiffs.

In sum, the Thesis is void because it invalidates itself according to its own logic. We will proceed to see how the Thesis is also baseless because it falsely supposes that certain principles are necessary, when in fact they are not, and how it can only support these principles by way of creating a circular argument.

1 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter X: On the Lack of Intention to Accept the Papacy, n. 2
2 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter X: On the Lack of Intention to Accept the Papacy, n. 8 (emphasis added)
3 Rev. N. Despósito, The Little Catechism on The Thesis, n. 9
4 Additional Argument: On Cardinals: The Words of Pius XII
5 Canon 231, P.1, Code of Canon Law, 1917 (emphasis added)
6 https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/documentation/cardinali---statistiche/composizione-per-area.html (as of October, 2025)
7 These reforms were made in the following documents: Romano Pontifici Eligendo [Paul VI, 1975]. Constitution Dominici Gregis University ["John Paul II", 1996], Electione Romani Pontificis ["Benedict XVI" 2007], Normas Nonnulas ["Benedict XVI", 2013].

8 Additional Argument: Convalidation does Not Apply
9 Most Reverend Donald J. Sanborn, Can Novus Ordo Baptisms be Trusted as Valid?, 2023, p.8
10 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter III: On Collegiality, 5th Article, n. 36
11 Canon 232, P.1, Code of Canon Law, 1917 (emphasis added)
12 Canon 949: “In the canons that follow, by the name of *major* orders or *sacred* orders are understood **presbyterate**, diaconate, and subdiaconate; while *minor* orders are acolyte, exorcist, lector, and doorkeeper.” Code of Canon Law, 1917 (emphasis added)

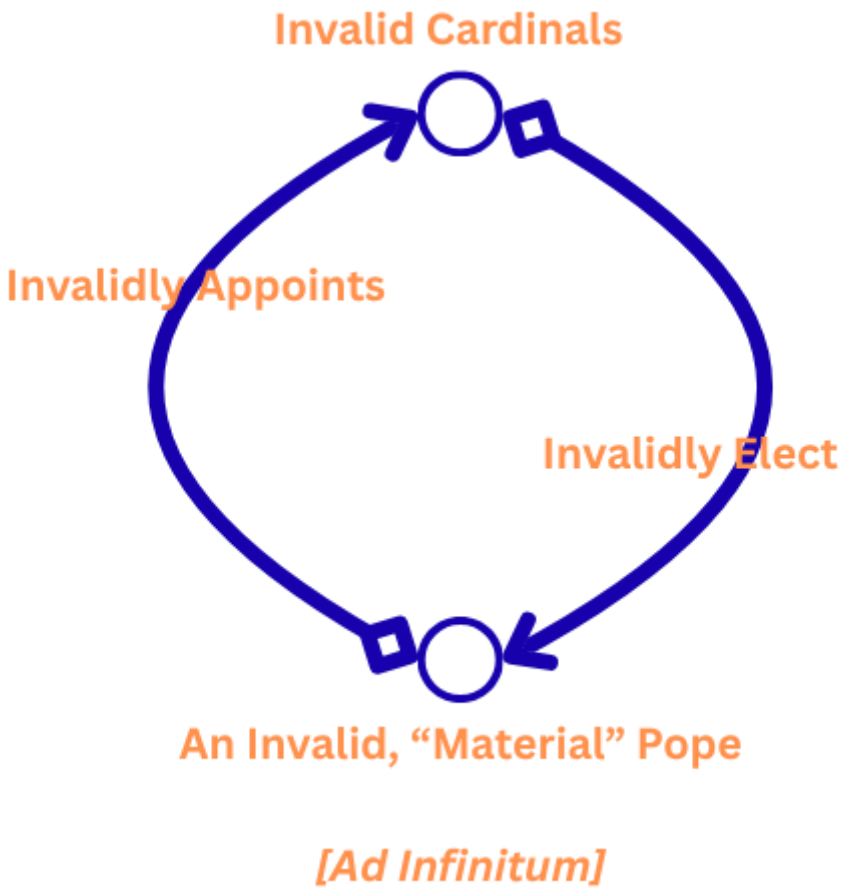
b) The Thesis is Baseless and Circular

We will examine both of these points together because they are closely interconnected.

Let us begin by reviewing the cycle of “elections” and “appointments” which is entailed by the Thesis:

The current cardinals do not have valid ordinations, nor do they follow the process of election prescribed by Pope Pius XII. Therefore, these “cardinals” are not valid and do not, in fact, perform a “valid” election.

Furthermore, the person the current “cardinals” designate is never really a pope (by their very own argument). He is, according to the Thesis, only a “material” pope.1 As such, this man holds no authority. Therefore, Thesis advocates ultimately posit a cycle in which invalid “cardinals” fail to elect a pope; instead, they invalidly elect a non-pope, who has no power and so invalidly appoints “cardinals” who themselves are invalid and perform an invalid election, etc. until such a time that this invalidly elected non-pope manifests the correct intention, receives the Papacy, and formally becomes the Roman Pontiff:



Now, of course, this model would not have been exactly the same at the original inception of the Thesis because at that time there were valid cardinals, and so perhaps one half of the cycle could at least be argued for. However, now we see that the model is both absurd and baseless.

Finally, Thesis advocates might try to claim that cardinals are necessary because alternative electors lack Ordinary Jurisdiction. However, not only does that create the problem of how the cardinals themselves have Ordinary Jurisdiction without a pope, but Thesis advocates contradict themselves on this point. Here is one prominent advocate making the claim:

> *“The reason why sedevacantist bishops are unable to receive supplied jurisdiction to elect the pope is because they do not possess any title to jurisdiction.”*2

Yet, here is this man’s superior and fellow Thesis advocate from the very same organisation:

> “The right of electing is **not jurisdiction or authority.** The right of electing the person to receive authority is not an authority or jurisdiction, because those who have this right, do not necessarily have the right of making a law.”3

Therefore, the claim about jurisdiction cannot be used to determine that cardinals are necessary. We will deal with the entire issue of jurisdiction and Apostolic Succession elsewhere.4 For now, it is sufficient to address the question of elections.

We are therefore left to wonder why there is such continued insistence on the reasonableness of this model. The answer is that Thesis advocates conclude that this model must be applicable because we must assume that cardinals are the only possible electors in the present. Moreover, Thesis advocates conclude that despite the very apparent lack of authority held by anyone in this model, that authority must be supplied by God because the model itself must be necessary. That is to say, the Thesis model is ultimately baseless, and must rely on a form of circular reasoning to sustain itself.

To see this, let us therefore examine the two claims: that cardinals are absolutely necessary for elections in the current situation, and that authority for the “cardinals” according to the Thesis model must be supplied by God.

First Claim: The Cardinals are Necessary for Elections

The use of cardinals as the primary electors of the Roman Pontiff has of course been longstanding practice within the Catholic Church. Nonetheless, it does not hold the status of being a Divine law. We know this because other methods have been used in the long history of the Church. Therefore, if it has been subject to change, it is demonstrably a human law, whereas Divine laws are changeless and eternal. Also, human law is always secondary to Divine law:

> “Human laws however, must be subordinate to the Divine law, or at least, must not contradict it...”5

That the Church will have perpetual, Apostolic succession, and always be able to elect a new pope is of Divine law. However, the use of cardinals as papal electors is merely human law. Therefore, to posit that the use of cardinals is a rule which is necessarily changeless is already erroneous, especially when this law might otherwise act as a block to a valid election.

Furthermore, we know that there are alternative options in the absence of cardinals, even if no explicit laws were given by a pope, because multiple Saints, Theologians, and Church documents posit as much. As at least two alternatives, in the absence of Cardinals, the right of election could fall to The Roman Clergy, or The Universal Church:

The Catholic Encyclopedia:

> "Should the college of **cardinals** ever become **extinct**, the duty of choosing a supreme pastor would fall… upon the remaining Roman clergy."6

St. Robert Bellarmine, Doctor of The Church:

> "If there were no papal constitution on the election of the Supreme Pontiff; or **if** by some chance all the electors designated by law, that is, **all the Cardinals, perished simultaneously**, the **right of election** would pertain to the **neighboring bishops and the Roman clergy, but with some dependence on a general council of bishops**."7

Cardinal Cajetan:

> "...**if** the colleges of **cardinals** were **extinguished**, the right to elect the pope would be returned to the clergy of Rome, **and then for the universal Church** in a general council..."8

Therefore, it is clearly demonstrable that alternatives to cardinals exist and have been presented as a real and serious option by the Church. Therefore, it is clearly false that we must conclude that cardinals are the only possible papal electors in our current situation. More will be said about the alternative options for elections in a later chapter. For now, it has been sufficient to demonstrate that the cardinals are not the absolute

and sole option for an election. Therefore, the claim that they are necessary cannot serve as a firm justification for the Thesis argument. Instead, because it is demonstrably not a necessity, we conclude that the Thesis is baseless.

Second Claim: The Power to Elect and Appoint is Supplied by God

The problem with this claim is not that it makes an appeal to Divine assistance, nor that it is a claim about supplied power. Instead, the problem with this claim is that it is not logically entailed by the Thesis argument, and is therefore presented as both logical and necessary when it is neither.

After all, once we deduce that we have invalid "cardinals" and a non-pope performing invalid elections in a perpetual cycle, we have the question of where the power to perform these elections and appointments comes from. It cannot come from holding these positions legitimately. Therefore, the Thesis advocates argue that this power must be supplied directly by Christ:

> "...the "Vatican II popes" do not receive supplied power indiscriminately, but only inasmuch as it is necessary for the common good of the Church… Christ could, and certainly would, in accordance with these principles, supply acts which are necessary for the very continuation of the Church, such as the appointment of papal electors."9

Therefore, the argument is that Christ would (and does) supply the necessary power to keep this non-cardinal, non-pope model functioning because Christ would supply what is necessary for the continuation of the Church. We do not deny that Christ would supply that which is necessary for the continuation of His Church, but notice the argument being implied by the Thesis advocates: Christ will supply power for what is necessary, and *Christ will supply power to the Thesis model because the Thesis model is necessary…*

That is to say, we can only reach the absolute conclusion that Christ would supply power to invalid "cardinals" *if* it is necessarily true that cardinals are the only means by which the Church could continue with

papal elections and continue itself. Therefore, to conclude that Christ would supply power to these invalid “cardinals” because it is necessary *is to already assume that the cardinals must be necessary for elections.* Therefore, it is a circular argument. If cardinals are not necessary (as we have already seen), the supplied power from Christ to allow invalid “cardinals” to perform a “valid” election is also unnecessary, and being unnecessary, simply does not follow from the argument.

At this juncture, Thesis advocates might try to maintain that cardinals are necessary because alternatives (such as the remaining, valid Bishops) do not currently have a *title to jurisdiction.* However, given that the only necessary thing is the act of election, we would therefore have to conclude that a title of jurisdiction is necessary for performing an election. Yet, as we have already seen, Thesis advocates contradict themselves on this point.10 Moreover, it raises the further question of how invalid “cardinals” validly give a title of jurisdiction to a non-pope, who in turn confers a valid title upon invalid “cardinals”, and so on. In short, this line of thinking returns to the same circular reasoning that the model suffers from.

The final possible recourse Thesis advocates could have is to make an appeal to “coloured” titles and common error; namely, that these invalid “cardinals” and non-popes have received “coloured” titles which are invalid and confer no power… yet, because they *appear* to be valid and are accepted by most people, their power is supplied. That is to say, the validity of the Thesis model and of the “Vatican II popes” is *ultimately maintained by perception*. This leads to the absurd conclusion that, therefore, if a majority of people should ever realise that the “Vatican II popes” are indeed invalid, that very fact would destroy the Thesis model and, according to the logic of the Thesis advocates, destroy the Church! This will be explained in more detail elsewhere.11

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In conclusion, the Thesis is void, baseless, and circular. Even if we do not consider any other “external” arguments, the logic of the Thesis itself, based upon the very same principles it presents, is simply untenable.

It is void because it leads to a series of dilemmas which prove that the Thesis advocates must deny their own principles in order to support them and maintain their model.

It is baseless and circular because the Thesis model assumes its own necessity to prove that it is necessary. Thus, it is circular because it assumes its conclusion, and baseless because the necessity that it invokes: the need for cardinals to perform an election, is no true necessity at all.

This is all to say that without any other consideration, the Thesis proves itself to be false and something to be at once discarded and avoided. It serves no benefit to a rational mind, and as no error can serve truth, it certainly does no favours to the Church.

Whilst we believe that these arguments alone could be enough to prove conclusively that the Thesis must be rejected, we will nonetheless proceed to deal with other, significant arguments made by Thesis advocates, anticipating further challenges that will be raised, and to give further proof to the error of this argument throughout its entire structure.

1 This concept is also fictitious and we will give a full explanation for this elsewhere: Core Argument: 3. On the Impossibility of a “Material” pope
2 Rev. N. Despósito, The Little Catechism on The Thesis. Question 12
3 Bp. Donald Sanborn, On Being a Pope Materially, n.15
4 Additional Argument: On Jurisdiction and Apostolic Succession
5 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “Canon Law”, 1913 edition.
6 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “Election of the Popes”, 1913 edition. (emphasis added)
7 St. Robert Bellarmine, Controversies Da Clerics, Book I, Chapter 10, 8th Proposition (emphasis added)
8 Cardinal Cajetan, Tractatus de comparatione auctoritatis Pape et Concilii seu Ecclesie universalis, 13,742,745. (emphasis added)
9 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter XIII: On the Canonical Crime of Heresy, 3rd Article, n. 25
10 Rev. N. Despósito, The Little Catechism on The Thesis. Question 12 & Bp. Donald Sanborn, On Being a Pope Materially, Point 15
11 Additional Argument: The Coloured Title Argument (or, “Schroedinger’s Church”)

3. On the Impossibility of a "Material" Pope

Thesis advocates often refer to the idea that the "Vatican II popes" have been "material" popes and often use this term in their arguments in an attempt to clarify their claims about such men's quasi-papal status. That is to say, they will not explicitly admit that these men have been "true popes", and use the concept of a "material" pope to support their argument, as an explanation as to how these men have enjoyed a right to the Papacy, without being true Roman Pontiffs.

We will here demonstrate that this is impossible because the very idea of a merely "material" pope is a novelty in the eyes of the Church, and nonsense according to philosophy, theology, and logic. Furthermore, far from being a support of their argument, an appeal to a "material" pope can only be validated by the same, false, circular model that we have already addressed. Finally, a "material" pope or "pope-elect" has never existed in Church history according to the definition given by the Thesis.

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a) "Material" Pope is a Meaningless Concept

To begin with we would like to mention that a "material" pope is an invention of the Thesis. Such an entity cannot be found anywhere in the history of Catholic thought. You will find no mention of a "material pope" or "pope *materialiter*" in any Catholic documents; encyclopaedias, or theological works.1

Now, let us review what Thesis advocates mean by a "material" pope:

> "45. The "Vatican II popes" could be said to be "materially" popes.
>
> By this we mean that although they are not real popes, the "Vatican II popes" had some material aspect of the papacy, namely the

> election to the papacy, to which they gave an apparent acceptance. This material aspect is not nothing. Indeed, for as long as they have it, only the “material pope” is entitled to become pope, to the exclusion of everyone else, and he could become the pope by a convalidation of the election, which would happen by a correction of his defective acceptance.
>
> This human element of the papacy, namely the designation by the electors, is not sufficient to make someone a pope. But it is nonetheless a necessary disposition to the reception of the papacy from Christ. It is the human element or disposition of the papacy, so to speak, which doctors and theologians have called the “material aspect” of the papacy. Hence the use of the expression “material pope” is justified for describing this strange situation of a person having received some human (“material”) element of the papacy, namely the election, and an apparent acceptance, while not having received the papacy itself from Christ, namely the divine authority to rule the Church, which theologians have described as being the “form” or “formal element” of the papacy.”2

Therefore, Thesis advocates define a “material” pope as an individual who has the sole rights to the Papacy because he has received *part* of the *matter* of the Papacy: an election. Of course, we already reject the claim that such individuals have received a valid election, as we explained elsewhere.3 However, we will not deal with this issue at present.

Instead, it is still possible to demonstrate that this is a false argument for at least two reasons:

i) The argument posits a being with matter but no form, which is impossible.

ii) In the practical order, an elected individual does not constitute the indefinite, “ultimate matter” of the Papacy.

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I) It is impossible and nonsensical to have a being with matter alone, without form.

To understand this, we must first outline the philosophy of these concepts. Thesis advocates claim that they draw upon Scholastic (Thomistic) philosophy, which in turn draws upon the work of Aristotle.

The concepts of matter and form are not complicated. Simply put, within our universe all beings are composed of *matter* and *form*.4 *Matter* is the underlying "substance" of a being, whereas *form* is the "organising principle"; the "shape" which makes a thing what it is. However, the application of this idea can be very broad.

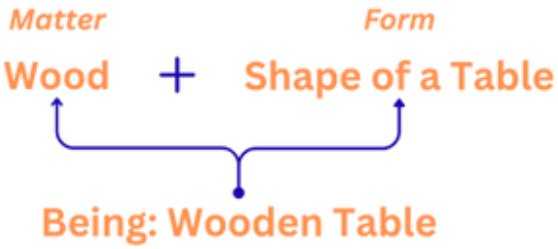
In Thomistic terms:

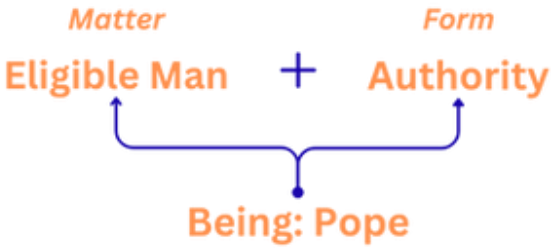
> "...*matter* has existence by reason of what comes to it because, of itself, it has incomplete existence. Hence, simply speaking, **the *form* gives existence to matter.**"5

That is to say, with *matter* alone, a thing does not yet exist. It is only when *matter* is combined with *form* that something truly comes into existence.

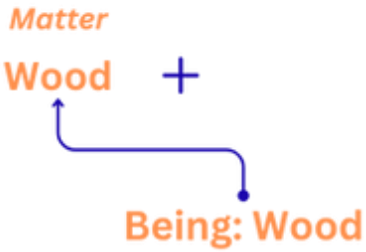
For example: consider a wooden table. If we simply posit a wooden table, it does not yet exist. We know we need some wood, and to shape that wood into a table. And so, we gather the wood: the wood is the *matter* of the table. However, we cannot say that a table **exists** yet; we only have some wood. Therefore, we have to add the *form* of the table to the wood; we have to transform the wood so that it has the shape of a table. Once we do this: once we have the *matter* **and** *form* of the table, the table truly exists.

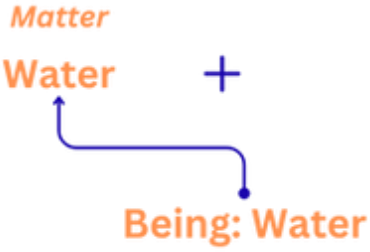
This does not only apply to things like tables and statues. It even applies to beings such as the sacraments (Baptism is water (*matter*) + the rite (*form*)), or even a pope (A pope is an Eligible Man (*matter*) + Papal Authority (*form*)):

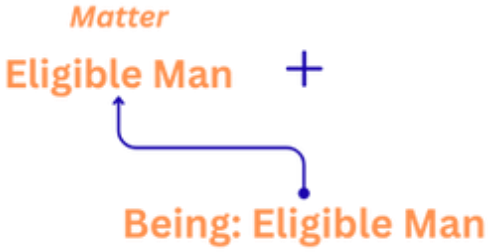




Therefore, we can already conclude that a "material" pope cannot be a being with a meaningful existence because by the rudimentary laws of Thomistic philosophy, the matter does not have existence or does not become a being until it is united with the correct form:







Therefore, we are left to consider how Thesis advocates can insist on the existence of such a being if it defies these basic, philosophical principles. The answer is that Thesis advocates point to the fact that a so-called "material" pope has received *some of the matter of the Papacy:*

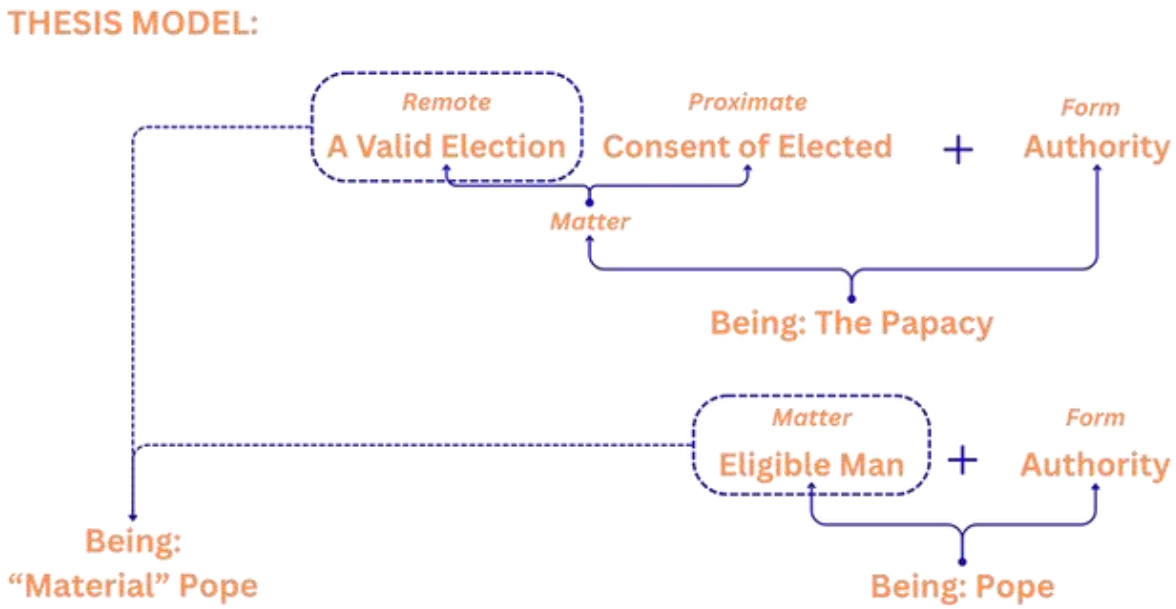
St. Antoninus:

> "Hence, if by the name of papacy we understand the election and determination of the person (which is the **material** thing in the papacy, as has been said before) then such power remains in the College after the death of the pope. But if by the name of papal power we understand his authority and jurisdiction (which is the **formal** thing), then such power never dies, because it always remains in Christ."6

Bachofen:

> Election is, we might say, the **remote material element**, whilst the consent of the elect is materia proxima, to which is added the divine **form** of the primacy embodied in the Roman bishop.7

Therefore, an election is *part* of the matter of the Papacy. However, the conclusion of the Thesis advocates is still nonsense. The theologians never state that any meaningful being is produced when the *matter* is not united to the *form*. After all, what we are positing is a being (the "material" pope) who meaningfully exists with two types of *matter*: the *matter* of a pope and *some matter* of the Papacy:



Thus, we see that this being: the “material” pope “exists” by being a combination of two types of *matter*, combined with no *form*. **However, if matter is not combined to form, there is simply no existence. To speak of a “material” pope is as meaningful as speaking of “Material” Baptism (which is just water). Therefore, the concept of a “material” pope is impossible nonsense.**

We would like to mention here that Thesis advocates might make the claim that beings can exist without *matter* and *form* if they are “beings *per-accidens*”. However, this claim is false, because it is a fundamental misapplication of what *per-accidens* means. We will examine this in full in our Additional Arguments.8 Moreover, Thesis advocates quote one theologian who claims that after an election the Church has a pope “in the womb” – another claim we will deal with in our Additional Arguments.9

The entity that Thesis advocates refer to with their model is rightfully called a “non-pope”, plain and simply. Or, “a man who has received an election.” The term “material” pope is merely rhetorical; giving the impression of a significant or meaningful entity where none exists.

Therefore, now that we have recognised the concept for what it is and have put it in its proper place, we might examine whether or not “a man who has received an election” is a pope in any meaningful sense.

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ii) In the practical order, an elected individual does not constitute the indefinite, “ultimate matter” of the Papacy.

Now that we have understood the rhetoric of the “material” pope title, we can understand that the Thesis argument is ultimately this:

A man has received an election (to be the pope), and because he has received an election, no one else can; that is what it means to call him the “ultimate matter” of the Papacy.10

That is the crux of the argument. We will now show that it is false.

Firstly, it is false because it assumes the validity and necessity of the current elections performed by the “cardinals”. As we have already shown, this is false because the “cardinals” do not have valid orders, and do not follow the valid rules of election. Moreover, the claim that necessity justifies these defects is void because the “cardinals” are not absolutely necessary for the election of a pope.11 Therefore, to claim that the “Vatican II popes” have been “material” popes and constitute “ultimate matter” due to a valid election is to already assume the same baseless, cyclical logic that we have already examined.

Secondly this argument is false on account of Canon Law. According to the Thesis logic, a man has received a valid election (which is already false), and as a result of this election, there is an indefinite period between his receiving notice of the election, and his acceptance of it; during which time no one else can receive an election:

> “In the **interval between the election and the acceptance**, the elect alone has the material aspect of the papacy (still requiring to be completed by the acceptance), but not yet the formal aspect. The **duration of this interval** is able to be determined by the electors, **but in itself is indefinite.**”12

Yet, this is simply false. The interval between a Papal election and the acceptance of an election is simply not indefinite. Here is Canon Law: 13

Canon 175:

> “The election should be communicated quickly to the one elected, who must **within at [most] eight useful days** from the reception of the information **make known** whether he consents to the election or **whether he refuses it; otherwise he loses all rights acquired from the election.**”14

Canon 176:

> “§ 1. **If an elected one refuses [to accept office], he loses all acquired rights from the election,** even if afterward he repents of the refusal; but he can be elected again; **the college must proceed**

> **to a new election within one month** of having notice of the refusal."15

Therefore, if the elected has not accepted his election within 8 days, Canon Law clearly states that it is to be taken as a refusal, at which point the elected loses all rights, and another election should be commenced within one month. That is very far from "indefinite".

Let us also keep clear in our minds that the Thesis argument is fundamentally founded on the claim that the "Vatican II popes" have *not accepted* their elections:

> "THE THESIS recognizes... that a **proper acceptance of the election has not occurred** by reason of an obstacle (defect of intention)."16

Therefore, the Thesis itself states that the elections have not been accepted within 8 days, therefore this is to be taken as a refusal, therefore the elected have lost all rights, and therefore the Church can (and should) proceed to another election. And this is all, of course, assuming that the elections are valid (yet, they are not).

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Therefore, the very concept of a "material" pope is untenable. It is illogical and a misapplication of philosophy because it posits a being which consists of *matter* but no *form*, or even two types of *matter* but no *form*, and thus no being positively exists.

Moreover, this cannot be salvaged with an appeal to the "Vatican II popes" as the "ultimate matter" of the Papacy because this requires us to accept the already false, circular model which assumes that the current, invalid "cardinals" perform valid, necessary elections; and even if these elections were to be assumed as valid, Canon Law states that such individuals would lose all rights to election within 8 days… not multiple generations.

Therefore, a “material” pope is a meaningless concept; it is not an entity which exists in fact, but merely a term not found in the annals of Catholic thought, which only produces a rhetorical effect.

Thesis advocates may now claim that such a being has existed in Catholic thought: particularly in Catholic history under the title of “pope-elect”. We will now review such claims and show them to be untrue.

1 Whilst there may have been mention of the matter of a pope, there has never been mention of a pope who exists as matter, without the form of a pope.
2 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter X: On the Lack of Intention to Accept the Papacy, 8th Article, n. 45
3 Core Argument: 2. The Thesis is Void, Baseless, and Circular
4 The only exceptions are purely spiritual beings such as God.
5 St. Thomas Aquinas, De Principiis Naturae. n.4, (R. A. Kocourek Translation)
6 St. Antoninus of Florence, Summa Sacrae Theologiae, Juris Pontificii et Caesarei, Tertia Pars, Tl. 21, Venetiis 1581 (emphasis added); quoted in: thethesis.us Chapter X: On the Lack of Intention to Accept the Papacy, 1st Article, n.7
7 Charles Augustine Bachofen, A Commentary on the New Code of Canon Law, Vol. II, London, 1918, p. 210 (emphasis added); quoted in: thethesis.us Chapter X: On the Lack of Intention to Accept the Papacy, 2nd Article, n.13
8 Additional Argument: A “Material” Pope as a “Being Per-Accidens”
9 Additional Argument: A “Pope in the Womb”
10 Bp. Donald Sanborn, On Being a Pope Materially, n.12
11 Core Argument: 2. The Thesis is Void, Baseless, and Circular
12 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter X: On the Lack of Intention to Accept the Papacy, 2nd Article, n. 11 (emphasis added)
13 It should here be noted that whilst Canon 160 states that “The election of the Roman Pontiff is guided solely by the const. of [Pope] Pius X *Vacante Sede Apostolica*”, there is no mention whatsoever in the constitution of Pius X (or Pius XII) about what to do when an election is refused. Canon Law states that when there is silence on an issue, we should refer to similar Canons or pre-existing laws (Canon 20 and Canon 6, n.4). Therefore, as the constitutions of Pius X and XII are silent on

cases of refusal, we ought to make reference to explicit Canons (such as 175 and 176).
14 Code of Canon Law, 1917 Edition (emphasis added)
15 Ibid (emphasis added)
16 Rev. N. Despósito, The Little Catechism on The Thesis. Question 8

b) There has never been a "Material" Pope or "Pope-Elect" in Catholic history.

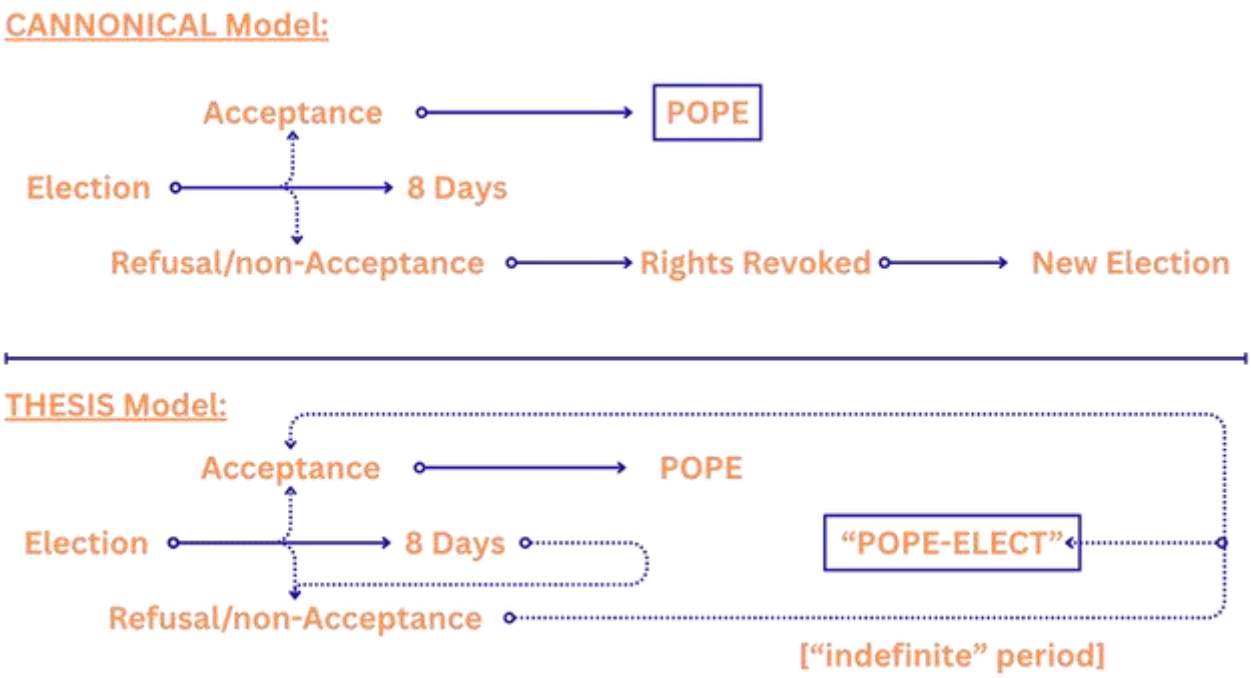
Let us begin by being clear about what the Thesis advocates mean by a "pope-elect": A "pope-elect" is the same individual as a "material" pope in their model:

> "...it is clear that it is legitimate to speak of a pope-elect as having some material aspect of the papacy, namely the remote material element, the election."1

Thus, a "pope-elect" is a "material" pope; an individual who has received an election, and thereby some "material" aspect of the Papacy (a concept which we have already falsified).

Let us therefore consider what it would mean to find such an individual in history. Of course, it is meaningless to find men who have received an election… every pope fits this description. Instead, the criteria for proving a "material"/pope-elect are more specific. In the sense relevant to the Thesis, a historical pope-elect would be: *a man who has received an election, yet did not accept it, and during the long, indefinite interim between his election and acceptance (exceeding 8 days) he was not truly the pope (formally), but nonetheless retained the right of election and no other elections could be performed.*

This is of course distinct from the canonical model of election, in which there is an acceptance-limit of 8 days:



Therefore, we shall consider whether such an individual ever existed.

In the most extensive work of the Thesis advocates, they only cite one pope as a historical example of a pope-elect who fits this model: Blessed Pope Victor III.

Here is how the Thesis advocates recount the history:

> "Pope Victor III was elected in 1086, but strongly **refused** to accept it. The Cardinals and the Roman populace tried to force him into accepting the papacy, and actually made him pontiff by force, **until he was able to flee from Rome,** after having deposed his pontifical insignia. He returned only one year later, in 1087, **convinced at last to accept the papacy,** at the sight of so many prayers and tears."2

Therefore, the Thesis advocates present a particular picture of events: he was elected in 1086, yet refused the election. Then, he fled Rome (implying, perhaps, that he fled his election…), he then returned in 1087 when he finally accepted his election and the Papacy… this of course entails the Thesis model: that there was long a period of many months between his election and his eventual acceptance of it, during which time he was not the pope, but merely a "pope-elect".

We should therefore conclude that Pope Victor did not commence his Papacy until 1087, despite the fact that he was elected in 1086. However, the official records state that he became pope in 1086:

> "n. 158: Victor III (**1086**-1087)"3

> "n. 158: [pontifex] Victor III, [creatus4] **1086** 5

It is therefore demonstrably false that Blessed Victor III's pontificate commenced in 1087, at the "acceptance" cited by the Thesis advocates. Instead, we ought to conclude that Blessed Victor accepted his election in 1086, because according to Canon Law:

> "The Roman Pontiff, legitimately elected, **immediately upon accepting the election**, obtains by divine law the full power of supreme jurisdiction."6

Let us now review another history of this election, given by the Catholic Encyclopedia:

> "The assembly now lost all patience; Desiderius was seized and dragged to the Church of St. Lucy where he was forcibly vested in the red cope and given the name of Victor (**24 May, 1086**). The church had been without a head for twelve months all but a day. **Four days later pope and cardinals had to flee from Rome before the imperial prefect of the city**, and at Terracina, in spite of all protests, Victor laid aside the papal insignia and once more retired to Monte Cassino where he remained nearly a whole year. In the middle of Lent, 1087, a council of cardinals and bishops was held at Capua at which the **pope-elect assisted as "Papal vicar of those parts"** (letter of Hugh of Lyons) together with the Norman princes, Cencius the Consul, and the Roman nobles; here Victor finally yielded and "by the assumption of the cross and purple confirmed the past election" (Chron. Cass., III, 68)."7

We can see a number of elements which contrast with the Thesis account. Firstly, the Encyclopedia does not state that Blessed Victor "refused" the Papacy; instead, it is implied that there was great *reluctance* on his part, but this does not equal an explicit refusal.

Moreover, he clearly did not flee Rome in order to flee the Papacy – instead, he was forced to flee, along with other clergy, on account of the imperial prefect. *Fleeing a Papacy and being forced away from Rome due to threat* are categorically different. He is referred to as “pope-elect” but this is *after* he is referred to as the *pope*.

In all, the history of Blessed Victor III does not constitute proof of a “pope-elect” by Thesis standards. He was not a man who was elected in 1086, refused in 1086, and then remained as a “pope-elect” for many months into 1087. Instead, he was elected in 1086, accepted in 1086 (at which point he became pope) but was not able to officially ascend until 1087. The official ascendancy is a formality - it is a way of publicly officiating a pope’s pontificate. However, it is not the start of pontificate; it is not the point at which a “pope-elect” becomes the pope; instead, that is the moment of acceptance, as stated in Canon Law.8

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In sum, the Thesis concept of a “material” pope is impossible and nonsensical. Within the realm of Thomistic philosophy, it is merely rhetorical; referring to an entity that cannot exist according to the very laws of being. When applied to history, no such “Material” pope or “pope-elect” has ever existed, neither in fact nor in thought.

Therefore, the concept of a “material” pope is a useless and false novelty, which further falsifies the Thesis argument, and ought to be rejected.

Now, we will turn to the question of heresy as it applies to the Thesis argument.

1 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter X: On the Lack of Intention to Accept the Papacy, 2nd Article, n. 13
2 thethesis.us, (2025) Chapter X: On the Lack of Intention to Accept the Papacy, Third Article, Number 18 (emphasis added)
3 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: List of Popes, 1913 Edition (emphasis added)
4 Latin for “created”
5 Vitae Pontificum Romanorum, Antonius Sandini, 1784, under “Pontificum Romanorum Index Alphabeticus” p.605

6 Code of Canon Law, 1917, Canon 219
7 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: Pope Blessed Victor III, 1913 Edition (emphasis added)
8 Code of Canon Law, 1917, Canon 219

4. On the Question of Heresy

The question of heresy is perhaps the argument most employed in discussions about the Thesis. That is to say, when the Thesis is proposed, the argument about heresy is frequently used to counter it.

We have decided not the make the question of heresy the primary focus of this extended refutation of the Thesis. We hope that, by now, it has been clearly demonstrated that exploring this question is unnecessary in order to demonstrate that the Thesis argument is void, baseless, and untenable.

However, given the frequent relevance of the argument from heresy, we still recognise its importance, and whilst a decisive refutation of the Thesis can be made without it, we hold that it nonetheless qualifies as a valid refutation of the Thesis position.

Let us be clear about why the question of heresy is relevant:

It is demonstrably clear that the Novus Ordo religion is a non-Catholic religion. It is therefore a heresy; a system of belief which is anathema to the Catholic faith. Therefore, those who publicly and pertinaciously profess it are heretics. The Novus Ordo hierarchy, at all levels, including the "Vatican II popes" and their "cardinals" have been publicly professing this non-Catholic faith for decades, through their teaching authority, despite giving themselves the name "Catholic".

Thesis advocates not only admit, but actively teach this.1 However, what they refuse to conclude is that such heresy has either removed these

Novus Ordo “clerics” from their offices, or made them unable to attain them. That is the contention of our present argument.

We will here demonstrate that the Thesis is false because heretical clerics lose their office automatically according to Divine law, without a need for a warning, without need for a declaration, and with presumed pertinacity. Therefore, because the clerics of the Novus Ordo church (including their “popes” and “cardinals”) are public promoters of the Novus Ordo heresies, they are to be regarded as heretics whose offices have either been vacated by this very fact, or were never occupied by the heretics to begin with.

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1 See, for example: thethesis.us (2025), Chapter II: On the New Doctrine of Vatican II, & Chapter III: On Collegiality

a) Heretics are Denied Office by Divine law

Firstly, here is the definition of heresy:

> “Canon 1325: § 2. After the reception of baptism, **if anyone, retaining the name Christian, pertinaciously denies or doubts something to be believed from the truth of divine and Catholic faith, [such a one is] a heretic...**”1

Therefore, a heretic is one who retains the name Christian (or in this case, Catholic) and pertinaciously denies or doubts part of the Catholic faith. Pertinacity is a key part of this. It is not enough to be merely ignorant or mistaken about a doctrine. Instead, one must knowingly and willingly deny Catholic Teaching.

Thesis advocates will claim that we cannot know if someone is pertinacious until they have received a public warning. This is false, as we will later show.

Also, *this argument is only concerned with public, notorious heretics.* Therefore, we are not concerned with heretics who hold their denial of the Catholic faith as a private, internal belief, but whose denial of the faith is visible and manifest in the *public* sphere.

Now, **the fact that heretics are denied office (i.e. removed from or unable to take office) is part of Divine law.** This is demonstrated by repeated statements of The Church in both her Ordinary and Extraordinary magisterium, as we will now see:

Pope Pius XII:

> "For not every sin, however grave it may be, is such as of its own nature to sever a man from the Body of the Church, as does schism or heresy or apostasy…"2

Pope Leo XIII:

> "The practice of the Church **has always been the same, as is shown by the unanimous teaching of the Fathers,** who were wont to hold as outside Catholic communion, and alien to the Church, whoever would recede in the least degree from any point of doctrine proposed by her authoritative Magisterium."3

St. Robert Bellarmine:

> "...the pope who is manifestly a heretic ceases by himself to be pope and head, in the same way as he ceases to be a Christian and a member of the body of the Church; and for this reason he can be judged and punished by the Church… **This is the opinion of all the ancient Fathers, who teach that manifest heretics immediately lose all jurisdiction...**"4

St. Francis de Sales:

> "Now when [a pope] is explicitly a heretic, **he falls ipso facto from his dignity and out of the Church, and the Church** must either deprive him, *or, as some say, declare him deprived*, of his Apostolic See..."5

St. Alphonsus Liguori:

> "If, however, God were to permit a pope to become a notorious and contumacious heretic, he would by such a fact cease to be pope, **and the apostolic chair would be vacant.**"6

Therefore, it is clear that heretics cannot hold office according to Divine law. The law is clearly Divine because it deals with a matter of faith and morals (a deviation from the faith removes someone from the Church) and this teaching is repeated through multiple authorities, including popes and doctors, who themselves refer it back to the Church Fathers.

This is also why the consequence of heresy (removal from the Church) cannot be reduced to a merely penal law because, strictly speaking, it is not a *penalty*, but a ***renunciation***. Nonetheless, this can have some penal effects. This point explains the relevance of the Papal Bull *Cum Ex Apostolatus Officio*, being a penal bull, but not merely penal in the ecclesiastical sense because it remunerates Divine consequences of heresy.7

Nonetheless, even if we leave this Bull aside, we see that the Divine law that public heretics lose their offices has been encoded in Canon Law:

Canon 188:

> "Through **tacit resignation**, accepted by the law itself, **all offices become vacant ipso facto and without any declaration if a cleric**: …n.4. Has publicly forsaken the Catholic faith."8

Therefore, according to Church teaching, heretics lose office by Divine law, and this is encoded in Canon Law, which explicitly states that this is automatic (*ipso facto*). This is further clarified by Doctor of Canon Law Gerald McDevitt:

> "As the law itself states, the placing of any of the acts mentioned in this canon [188] effects the vacancy of the cleric's office **without the need of any declaration** on the part of the superior. This effect is attributed to a **tacit renunciation** as sanctioned by the law itself... **In**

> **a tacit renunciation no formalities are prescribed.** All that is necessary is that the cleric perform one of the acts or be accountable for one of the **omissions** to which the law attaches the effect of a tacit renunciation of office"9

Furthermore, the same author explains that to "publicly forsake the Catholic faith" according to Canon 188.4 entails **public heresy or apostasy**, and that this need only be publicly recognisable by a group of people, *not* a majority.10

Therefore, according to Divine law, heretics lose office automatically; and according to Canon Law, heretics lose office automatically once their heresy is publicly manifest before any declaration, even if this is not manifest before a majority of individuals. This applies to the Novus Ordo clergy because their promulgation of the teachings of Vatican II constitutes public heresy.

Nor does this require a warning, as we will see.

1 Code of Canon Law, 1917 (emphasis added)
2 Pope Pius XII, Mystici Corporis, 1943
3 Pope Leo XIII, Satis Cognitum, 1896 (emphasis added)
4 St. Robert Bellarmine, De Romano Pontifice, lib. II, cap. 30, 1588 (emphasis added)
5 St. Francis de Sales, The Catholic Controversy, Rule Of Faith, Chapter XIV (emphasis added)
6 St. Alphonsus Liguori, Verita della Fede, III, VIII. 9-10 (emphasis added)
7 The Papal Bull: Cum Ex Apostolatus Officio by Paul IV is often cited against the Thesis because of its clear censures against heretics, with reference to their loss of office. The significance of the Bull is rejected by Thesis advocates who regard it as (merely) penal or having been "abrogated" by the 1917 Code of Canon Law. However, we regard this issue irrelevant for the current discussion because we can proceed with our focus upon the Code. We discuss this Bull, along with other issues in: Additional Argument: Repentant Heretics do not Reclaim Office
8 Code of Canon Law, 1917 (emphasis added)
9 Rev. Gerald V. McDevitt, Doctor of Canon Law, The Renunciation of an Ecclesiastical Office, 1946 p.113 (emphasis added)

10 Ibid, pp.137-139

b) For the Effects of Canon 188.4, a Warning is not Required

Thesis advocates may argue that a warning is required before the tacit renunciation of Canon 188.4 becomes applicable. The argument is that, given that the relevant kind of heresy must be pertinacious, and given that knowledge is required for pertinacity, we cannot conclude that a given cleric is a heretic until we have proof of knowledge, and we cannot have proof of knowledge prior to a warning.1

However, this is false for two reasons:

i) guilt is *presumed* in this case according to Canon Law,

ii) we can presume knowledge (and therefore guilt) when an individual has sufficient education.

Before we discuss the evidence for these reasons, it is also worth noting that the Thesis advocates make another argument about warnings, invoking prescriptions within Canon 2314. However, we regard this as a separate argument because our present discussion deals with **tacit renunciation** entailed by Canon 188.4, whereas Canon 2314 deals with different penalties including *excommunication*, *deposition*, and *degradation* – each with a distinct meaning. Furthermore, the Thesis advocates' invocation of Canon 2314 draws an erroneous connection to Canon 188.4, and also entails a discussion about the nature of non-Catholic sects. Therefore, we will here proceed with the relevant question of tacit renunciation. Nonetheless, we will address Canon 2314 in our Additional Arguments.2 **It is also worth noting that in these arguments, more will be proven about the fact that heretics not only lose office, but also cannot be appointed to office**.3

Now, let us review the reasons for why a warning is not required for Canon 188.4 and tacit renunciation:

i) guilt is *presumed* in this case according to Canon Law.

In Canon Law, the *wilful*, *knowing* intent required to recognise pertinacity is also called *dolus*.4 And, according to Canon Law:

Canon 2200:

> §2. Positing an external violation of the law, *dolus* in the external forum is presumed until the contrary is proven.5

Therefore, when we posit something like an external manifestation of heresy in the external (public) domain, we are to presume the guilt of such heretics until it is proved otherwise. In the case of heresy, this can entail either a public heretical statement, or a heretical action.

Therefore, we can presume the pertinacity (*dolus*) of the Novus Ordo clergy according to Canon Law on account of their public professions of heretical teachings. Therefore, being public, pertinacious heretics, they fulfil the criteria for tacit resignation and automatic removal from office according to Canonical and Divine law.

ii) we can presume knowledge (and therefore guilt) when an individual has sufficient education.

According to theologian Cardinal John de Lugo:

> "...in the external forum, **a previous admonition and reprimand is not always required to punish someone as heretical and pertinacious;** nor is such requirement always admitted in the practice of the Holy Office. For if it can be **ascertained in some other way**, given the defendant's qualities, **obvious doctrinal knowledge and other circumstances**, that he could not be unaware that his doctrine was opposed to the Church's, **by this very fact he will be considered a heretic**… The reason for this is clear, for external admonition can only serve to make the person in error become aware of the opposition existing between his error and the doctrine of the Church. **If he knows the subject much more through books and conciliar definitions than he could through the words of his admonisher, there is no reason to require**

another admonition for him to become pertinacious against the Church."6

In a word, we ought not presume ignorance and a lack of pertinacity in educated persons, especially in matters of simple doctrine. This certainly applies to the Novus Ordo clergy: men who have done years of Catholic study. We must at *least* include basic Catechism is this. Amongst many other heresies, the Novus Ordo church endorses worship alongside non-Catholic sects7. **This is a sin against the First Commandment according to basic Catechism:**

"318. Q. How may the first Commandment be broken?

A. The first Commandment may be broken… **by false worship.**"8

Therefore, it is clear that De Lugo's statements apply to the Novus Ordo clergy. **No clergyman (let alone "popes" and "cardinals") can plead ignorance of the First Commandment, and therefore no warning is required to make them aware of such heresy. The only "clergymen" who could conceivably plead such ignorance are those who are members of churches other than the Catholic Church.** The Novus Ordo hierarchy universally support and promote the teachings of the Second Vatican Council documents; they watch, support, and assist in the actions of their "clergy", even their "popes" as they break the First Commandment, whilst publicly, consistently, and institutionally committing numerous other heresies which defy an elementary understanding of Catholic doctrine.9

Therefore, we have sufficient grounds to conclude that the Novus Ordo clerics have incurred tacit renunciation of their offices according to Canon Law – either their offices have been lost as a result, or could not be attained to begin with. This is because heresy separates a cleric from an office by Divine law, and the Novus Ordo clergy have universally manifested, adhered to, and publicly promoted the heresies of the Second Vatican Council, despite their extensive learning. Therefore, their heresy is manifest, their pertinacity (*dolus*) is to be presumed, and we are to recognise their offices as being vacant as a result of this very fact, and without any requisite warning.

Therefore, this question of heresy demonstrates that the Thesis is false because the heretical clergy of the Novus Ordo church are heretics, including their "popes", "cardinals", and even their "bishops" and "archbishops" who are supposed to be the *most* highly educated amongst them, and therefore give the *most* grounds for a presumption of guilt, and a vacancy of office.

Finally, it is worth emphasising that although heretics can repent (as we hope all do), repentant heretics do not automatically re-claim any vacated offices by virtue of this act. We will demonstrate this point more fully in our Additional Arguments.10

1 This argument is explicitly made, here: Fr. Bernard Lucien, The Problem of Authority in the Post-Conciliar Church: The Cassiciacum Thesis, p.4. Also, it is alluded to, here: thethesis.us, (2025) Chapter XIII: On the Canonical Crime of Heresy, 3rd Article, n.18
2 Additional Argument: Canon 2314, Excommunication, and Non-Catholic Sects
3 We have also made fuller arguments on this point in Additional Argument: Repentant Heretics do not Reclaim Office, & Additional Argument: Of the Novus Ordo Sect and Seven Refutations
4 Thesis advocates supply this definition in their own works: thethesis.us, (2025) Chapter XIII: On the Canonical Crime of Heresy, Footnotes: n.15
5 Code of Canon Law, 1917 edition
6 Cardinal John de Lugo,Disputationes, 2:disp. XX, sect. IV, no. 157-158. Also see: Antonius Diana, Resolutiones Morales (Venice: Franc. Baba, 1635), pars IV, tract. VII, resol. 36; Vermeersch, 3:245; Noldin, Compl. de Poenis Eccl., 21; Regatillo, 2:508
7 This was made explicit in Vatican II document Unitatis Redintegratio, n.33: "it is allowable, indeed desirable that Catholics should join in prayer with their separated brethren."
8 The Baltimore Catechism, 1885
9 The heresy of the Vatican II documents is well recognised by Thesis advocates. For one example, see: thethesis.us (2025), Chapter II: On the New Doctrine of Vatican II. The widespread and universal heretical practice of the Novus Ordo hierarchy is too extensive for us to document here. It suffices to say that many faithful Catholics, both lay and clerical,

have extensively documented these heresies; which have been manifested in both word and action, individually and collectively.
10 Additional Argument: Repentant Heretics do not Reclaim Office

5. On Alternative Solutions

Now that the Thesis argument has been shown to be void, self-defeating, and contrary to Divine law, the final argument might be the claim that the Thesis argument is necessary because all other solutions to the question of Papal election are impossible.

This is not only false, but the opposite of the truth because the Thesis (being void and illogical) is itself impossible, whereas alternative suggestions are indeed possible, as we will see.

The potential solution we here present is the possibility of an imperfect general council electing a pope. It is worth noting from the outset that however *improbable* such a solution would seem due to the practical challenge it poses, all that is required is to show that such an option is *at least possible* in order to refute the Thesis position.

To make this argument, we will first review the claim that proponents of this alternative are “Conclavists”, and then we will review the possibility of a council in more detail, including its justification, attendance, and source of authority.

a) The Accusation of “Conclavism”

Officially, the term “Conclave” is simply used to refer to the closed-door meeting in which cardinals elect a pope.1

The term “Conclavist” or “Conclavism” is used by Thesis advocates as a pejorative to refer to an event in which a group of Catholics come together to illegitimately elect a pope, also calling it “mob rule”. They have a habit of reducing all alternative solutions to this term (except Divine intervention).2

However, we take the use of this pejorative to be both an irony and a straw-man of the argument. After all, as we have seen, the Thesis model itself argues for a conclave in this pejorative sense: they argue that the Church relies on not only one, but recurring conclaves of invalid, non-Catholic usurpers who illicitly elect a man who is, at least, a “material” pope according to the Thesis model (as we have refuted).3

Moreover, the use of the pejorative and the claim of “mob rule” is a straw-man fallacy because whilst illegitimate, mob-like conclaves can (and do) happen,4 the argument to be presented does not propose a conclave in this sense of any kind; Thesis advocates have implied that a call for an Elective Council is “Conclavist” as if it can only be arbitrary, following no Catholic precedent or clear rules. However, as we will see this is far from the truth because the call for such a council does indeed follow Catholic principles and rules, laid down by theologians, including Doctors of the Church.

1 New Catholic Dictionary (Vatican Edition), 1929, p.240, see: “Conclave”
2 Bp. Sanborn, Explanation of the Thesis of Bishop Guérard des Lauriers, p.8
3 Core Argument: 2. The Thesis is Void, Baseless, and Circular & Core Argument: 3. On the Impossibility of a “Material” Pope
4 For examples, see: the election of “Pope Gregory XVII” of the Palmarian Church, or the infamous election of “Pope Michael”.

b) (One) Possible Alternative: A General Council

Canon Law recognises that it cannot give explicit provisions for all unforeseen situations. It has not given explicit provisions for what to do should we lack cardinal electors, if the Church should lose a vast number of clerics from defections, and if an election is required during a time when no clergy enjoy ordinary jurisdiction. Nonetheless, we read:

Canon 20:

> "If on a given matter there is **lacking an express prescription of law,** whether general or particular, the rule is to be surmised, unless it concerns the application of a penalty, from **laws laid down in similar cases;** [then] from the **general principles of law observed with canonical equity;** [then] from the **style and practice of the Roman Curia;** and [finally] **from the common and constant opinions of the doctors.**"1

Of course, this raises the question of what, exactly, is entailed by "similar cases", the "general principles of law", the "practice of the Roman Curia", and "the common opinions of the doctors", but we nonetheless have precedent given by Canon Law for discerning a solution to a novel problem.

What we present here is one possible alternative to the current problem; that is to say, one possible alternative option for electing a new pope: a general council which can perform a valid election.

We will see that this option is supported by theologians, including St. Robert Bellarmine, Doctor of the Church. It is an idea that has been explicitly justified, with criteria to be followed.

Therefore, to understand this option, we will review:

i) How such a council is justified,

ii) Who may attend this council,

iii) How the council gains sufficient authority for an election.

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i) How a general council is justified

Let us begin with the words of Cardinal Thomas Cajetan, who states:

> "...if the colleges of **cardinals were extinguished,** the **right to elect** the pope would be returned to the clergy of Rome, and **then for the universal Church in a general council.**"2

This statement is confirmed by St. Robert Bellarmine:

> "...if by some chance all the electors designated by law, that is, **all the Cardinals, perished simultaneously,** the right of election would pertain to the neighbouring bishops and the Roman clergy, **but with some dependence on a general council of bishops.**"3

Therefore, we see once again that the possibility that the cardinals could be lost (and are therefore not strictly necessary) was recognised amongst theologians, as we discussed elsewhere.4 From these words, it is clear that the loss of the cardinals would itself present grounds for a general council.

We see that such a general council would be imperfect, but could nonetheless serve the function of election:

> "Without the authority of the pontiff, in no case can a true and perfect council be convoked that has the authority to define questions of Faith. Nevertheless, in such cases, an imperfect council may be assembled, **which will be sufficient to provide for the Church with regard to her head.**"5

Moreover, St. Bellarmine deals explicitly with the question of what would justify a general council. He gives multiples reasons, two of which are most pertinent to our situation:

> "...the particular reasons, on account of which Councils are celebrated, are usually numbered as six...
>
> d) **The fourth reason is suspicion of heresy in the Roman Pontiff...**
>
> e) **The fifth reason is doubt about the election of a Roman Pontiff..."**6

The first reason does not apply to us, strictly speaking, because we do not recognise that there positively is a Roman Pontiff who is a heretic;

instead, suspicion of heresy in *a man who most people mistakenly consider to be the Roman Pontiff.* However, the second reason does apply to us because it is clear that the elections of the "Vatican II popes" have been invalid.

Therefore, we see that a general council has been posited by theologians as a serious alternative should we lack cardinals, and that our present situation gives justification for it. Therefore, it is already clear that those who reject the Thesis have every right to avoid it as a new idea, in favour of a possibility which has been posited by approved Doctors of The Church. **This alone should suffice to place the alternative of a council over the Thesis.**

ii) Who may attend an imperfect general council.

St. Bellarmine gives us four conditions for who should be included at a council:

> … 1) The evocation shall be general, so that it is known to all the greater Christian provinces.
>
> ... 2) **That no Bishop would be excluded, no matter from where he would come, provided it is certain he is a Bishop and has not been excommunicated.**
>
> … 3) That the four patriarchs, apart from the Supreme Pontiff, would be present… **This third [condition] is not altogether necessary,** but only judged to be good…
>
> … 4) That some should arrive from at least a greater part of the Christian provinces…"7

As we can see, of these four conditions, only the first two could be called necessary: that the call to the council should be general, and that **all Bishops** should be included **except those who have been excommunicated.** That is to say, all remaining, *legitimate* Bishops; this *does not* include any of the heretics or schismatics of the Novus Ordo church because they lack valid orders (and are therefore not even

Bishops) and, as we have already seen, they have incurred excommunication.8

Nor must this *only* include Bishops with ordinary jurisdiction. After all, St. Bellarmine does not specify this, and we see in Canon Law that it is possible for Bishops without jurisdiction to vote in councils:

Canon 223:

> § 2. Also, titular Bishops called to the Council obtain a deliberative vote, unless it is expressly determined otherwise in the convocation.9

We are aware of one Thesis advocate who claims that Cajetan has implied that such Bishops must hold Ordinary Jurisdiction, but this is false as we will show in our Additional Arguments.10

In sum, such a general council could include all remaining, legitimate Bishops who have valid orders and profess the Catholic faith, even if such Bishops hold no Ordinary Jurisdiction.

iii) How a general council gains sufficient authority for an election.

The final question is how such a general council has sufficient authority to perform the election. The answer is simple: this authority is supplied by Christ. We have shown elsewhere that the Thesis advocates erroneously invoke Supplied Jurisdiction for their own argument.11 However, the concept of Supplied Jurisdiction is valid and may apply in cases of a real necessity: the Church is a perfect society, which retains all it needs to be self-sufficient at all times.12 However, unlike the Thesis model, this alternative places that exercise within the hands of valid clergy, not in the hands of invalid apostates.

To explicitly establish that a general council would be supplied authority by Christ, Doctor of the Church St. Alphonsus Liguori states:

> "...in the absence of a pope the general council receives the supreme power immediately from Christ"13

—

Therefore, this section has presented a brief consideration but it is nonetheless sufficient to demonstrate that there is an alternative option to the Thesis model, and that this model has been supported by Doctors of the Church.

Whilst this does not satisfy all of the practical questions about how such a council would be arranged and executed, it nonetheless refutes the Thesis argument because, however impractical such a council may be, its very possibility refutes the Thesis claim that theirs is the only possible solution. In fact, this alternative solution is in a different category of potential compared with the Thesis model because this alternative is at least possible, however slightly, whereas the Thesis solution, being void and contrary to logic, is categorically impossible.

1 Code of Canon Law, 1917 edition (emphasis added)
2 Cardinal T. Cajetan, Tractatus de comparatione auctoritatis Pape et Concilii seu Ecclesie universalis, 13,742,745. (emphasis added)
3 St. Robert Bellarmine, Controversies De Clerics, Book I, Chapter 10, 8th Proposition
4 Core Argument: 2. The Thesis is Void, Baseless, and Circular
5 St. Robert Bellarmine, Disputes on the Christian Faith, On the Church, Chapter XIV, p. 84, CDB translation
6 St. Robert Bellarmine, On Councils: Their Nature and Authority, Chapter IX, R.G. Translation
7 St. Robert Bellarmine, On Councils: Their Nature and Authority, Chapter XVII, R.G. Translation
8 Core Argument 4. On the Question of Heresy, & Additional Argument: Canon 2314, Excommunication, and non-Catholic Sects
9 Code of Canon Law, 1917 Edition
10 Additional Argument: Cajetan and Ordinary Jurisdiction
11 Additional Argument: On Jurisdiction and Apostolic Succession
12 The Catholic Encyclopedia 1913, see: The Church, (part XIII)
13 Full quote: “It should first be noted that the superiority of the Pope over the council does not extend to the dubious Pope in the time of a schism when there is a serious doubt about the legitimacy of his election; because then everyone must submit to the council, as defined by the

Council of Constance. Then indeed the General Council draws its supreme power directly from Jesus Christ, as in times of vacancy of the Apostolic See, as it was well said by St. Antoninus." S. Alphonsus de Liguori, Du Pape et Du Concile, (Trns. Fr. Jules Jacques),1869, p.439

Conclusion

Now that we have seen this core refutation in full, it is clear that the *Thesis of Cassiciacum* as presented by its modern advocates is an utterly untenable argument.

The Thesis is void, it is baseless, it is self-defeating, and it is circular. If we look to its own principles alone, we see that it cannot support itself and leads to internal contradictions, leading to a model which assumes its own validity as its ultimate support. Furthermore, the model is simply unnecessary, and thus has no right to justify itself. Moreover, the model contains nonsensical, impossible concepts which would also invalidate it. And when we consider the more common refutation made against the Thesis: that of the question of heresy, we see that this does indeed serve as a valid refutation (and always has).

Indeed, we here posit that such a work as this ought not to have been necessary for refuting the Thesis, as many of its definitive refutations are readily apparent. Nonetheless, works supporting the Thesis develop ever more to add new angles to its argument in an attempt to justify it, giving it a semblance of credence which, upon further examination, continuously prove to be false.

As it stands, we here claim that this core refutation has been sufficient to demonstrate that the Thesis is simply false and therefore must be rejected: rejected by every faithful Catholic. It ought to be rejected because it's false, but more than that, it ought to be rejected because it presents many dangers: dangers for the faithful, dangers against the faith itself, and the danger of giving ever more power to our insidious enemies. Therefore, we ought to utterly reject this dangerous error so that we might strengthen our position in these perilous times.

In particular, we call upon the clergy to lay-down this error. It does not solve problems, it creates them. And whilst it continues to be shared amongst yourselves and your congregations, it can only ferment more confusion, weakening our Catholic communities. Whether or not this has been your intention is beside the point. What we are emphasising is that if your intention is to serve the Church and its members, you ought to set the Thesis aside.

Now, there are a number of additional arguments and points which can be explored to give a fuller understanding of the Thesis and its refutation. This will now be presented in *Part 2.*

Part 2:

The Additional Arguments

Additional refutations in support of the core argument, with additional arguments and considerations.

Introduction

In this section we will present a number of additional arguments which pertain to the Thesis questions, whether directly or indirectly. Many such arguments are direct continuations of points mentioned in our *Part 1*, whereas others address questions which are not directly connected to *Part 1*, but are nonetheless complimentary to the overall argument.

Therefore, the individual sections of this part are only semi-organised. For the most part, they proceed in the order that they mirror the relevant arguments in *Part 1*, but a reader need not approach them in this order, and is invited to proceed through them in any way they see fit.

Finally, we recognise that this list of additional arguments is not fully comprehensive enough to deal with every possible detail of the Thesis arguments, and every possible counter-argument that might be raised against this refutation. Nonetheless, we believe that those presented will be sufficient to address the vast majority of Thesis arguments, especially when taken in tandem with the core argument of *Part 1*.

If it proves to be necessary, we might add more articles to this second part in the future.

On Cardinals: the Words of Pius XII

As we showed in our Core Argument,1 we find the following claim in the writing of Thesis advocates (in this case, Rev. N. Despósito):

> "Is the College of Cardinals the only body that can validly elect the pope?
>
> Yes, the College of Cardinals is the only body that can validly elect the pope. Pope Pius XII, echoing his predecessors, affirms that "the **right** to elect the Roman Pontiff belongs solely and exclusively to the Cardinals.""2

Therefore, the original quote attributed to Pope Pius XII is:

> "...the **right** to elect the Roman Pontiff belongs solely and exclusively to the Cardinals."

However, here is the full, original quote:

> «Quapropter, re mature perpensa, certa scientia et de Apostolicae Nostrae potestatis plenitudine, hanc Constitutionem, quae eadem est ac illa a Pio X s. m. data, sed passim reformata, edere et promulgare statuimus, «**qua — ut verbis utamur eiusdem Praedecessoris Nostri — Sacrum Cardinalium Collegium,**

> **Romana Petri Sede vacante, ac in Romano Pontifice eligendo unice utatur...**»»3

Which translates to:

> "Wherefore, after mature consideration, with sure knowledge and from the fullness of Our Apostolic power, We have decreed and determined to publish this Constitution, which is the same as that given by Our predecessor Pius X of holy memory, but reformed in several parts, 'by which — to use the words of that same Predecessor of Ours — '**the Sacred College of Cardinals, when the See of Peter in Rome is vacant, and in electing the Roman Pontiff, shall make sole use**'…"

It is notable that the word ***right***, does not appear. Therefore, it does not state explicitly that the cardinals have the ***sole right*** to elect a pope. Also, the passage is stating that the *constitution* should be used *only* by the cardinals. That is simply to say, these rules laid-down by Pius XII are only addressing the cardinals, and do not apply to anyone else. This is clear to reason because the cardinals of his time really were the legal Papal electors, and they were legitimate. However, this does *not* establish that cardinals are the sole, necessary electors if the College of Cardinals should be compromised in some way (or cease to exist).

Therefore, we take the presentation of Pope Pius XII's words to be tenuous. Their presentation in the Thesis works imply that Pope Pius XII (and Pius X) are insisting that cardinals hold the sole and exclusive right to election (without exception). Instead, a reading of the full passage does not indicate this. The passage simply declares that the cardinals were to be the sole recipients of *these particular provisions* set by the two popes, given that cardinals were the official electors of their time.

1 Core Argument: 2. The Thesis is Void, Baseless, and Circular
2 Rev. N. Despósito, The Little Catechism on The Thesis, n.9 (emphasis added)
3 Pope Pius XII: Vacantis Apostolicae Sedis, 1945 (emphasis added)

Convalidation Does Not Apply

We argued in the Core Argument that the Thesis faces a dilemma according to its own logic because the Novus Ordo “cardinals” follow an invalid model of election, thereby creating a cycle in which a non-pope invalidly appoints non-cardinals who, in turn, invalidly elect a non-pope...1

Thesis advocates might try to argue that this cycle of invalidity could ultimately be validated by the principles of *convalidation*.

Convalidation is explicitly applied to marriage – under certain circumstances, it can validate a marriage that was otherwise invalid depending on particular criteria. Arguing that these same principles can apply to election, the Thesis advocates make the following argument:

> “The analogy [of marriage] with the papal election is evident. A papal election could be invalid, 1) firstly, because the person is not able to be elected, through an obstacle of either divine or ecclesiastical law. 2) Secondly, the election could be invalid on account of a defect of consent. 3) A papal election could be invalid because the proper rules of election have not been followed.
>
> It is interesting to notice that in all these three cases, the matrimony can sometimes be convalidated. In the same way, an invalid papal election is often able to be remedied.”2

The Thesis advocates proceed to argue the various possibilities for applying convalidation to validate an invalid papal election:

> “If we consider **the first case**, that of an impediment which would make a person unable to be elected, the general principle is that if the impediment were to cease, the marriage (or the papal election) could then become valid. Hence theologians such as Passerini [27] have deduced that, were a heretic elected pope, he could still accept the election validly if he were to remove this impediment by embracing the true faith. [28] ...
>
> If we consider **the third case**, for example, which is the defect of form. It is commonly agreed by theologians that the universal acceptance of the Church would always remedy any defect in the process of election. In other words, supposing that the cardinals

> have not followed the rules of the conclave as they have been obliged to by previous decrees of the Roman pontiffs, yet the election would be ratified or convalidated, should the whole Church passively recognize the new pope as legitimate successor of St. Peter."3

It is worth noting that the second case: the lack of proper consent, needs little attention because, for the Thesis argument, it is taken up with the first case: namely, for the Thesis advocates, the fact that the "pope-elect" does not embrace the true faith and does not consent to the Papacy are, ultimately, the same issue.4

Now, let's consider whether these proposed solutions apply…

To begin with, we must recognise that in our current situation, *all three* of the impediments apply: the current non-pope is impeded from the fulfilment of a valid election because a) he does not manifest the Catholic faith, b) he has not validly accepted the election, and c) there is a defect in the very procedure of election on behalf of the "cardinals". *Therefore, all three impediments would need to be convalidated*. Moreover, a convalidation in one case does not apply to the other two. They are all distinct. Therefore, we would need all three convalidations to apply distinctly in order for the election to be rendered valid.

The first case: if the non-pope were validly elected but did not embrace the true faith, some theologians posit that he could validly accept the election if he were to *accept* the true faith.

However, applied to our situation, no such acceptance has occurred. Moreover, the elections themselves have not been valid. Therefore, this applies to a correction of defect in a *valid* election on behalf of the elected. However, it does not follow that this first case applies to a correction of defect on behalf of *both* the elected and the invalid election. A simple desire to accept the true faith does not render someone validly elected if the procedure of election itself is invalid. Otherwise, the procedures of election would be rendered utterly trivial; a man need only accept the true faith, yet be elected by anyone, under any circumstances, and become the Roman Pontiff – this very idea is something that Thesis advocates deride as "mob rule".5

Therefore, this first case does not solve the current problem.

The third case (the most relevant for our argument): an invalid election could be made valid by universal acceptance. That is to say, if there were a defect in the *procedure* of the election, that invalid election could nonetheless produce a valid, Roman Pontiff if he were accepted to be such by the universal church.

Of course, this would assume that such an individual has also manifested the Catholic faith, and also validly accepted such an election.

Therefore, applied to our current situation, the argument is this: *there is a man who does not manifest the Catholic faith, who has not accepted his Papal election, and whose papal election was, itself, invalid. However, if he does manifest the faith and (therefore) truly accepts the election, and he is accepted by the universal Church as the Roman Pontiff, that would render him a validly elected, true pope.*

However, there are multiple problems with this conclusion.

Firstly, it is another conclusion that renders the Thesis argument void because *if* a valid election is not required and the procedure can be corrected by universal acceptance, the Thesis model is *not necessary;* we simply do not need to have the non-pope, non-Cardinal cycle that they propose, and alternative options may be rendered valid (if universal acceptance *can* apply).

Secondly, this argument is either ambiguous, or it is circular. We have no clear definition of the "Universal Church". If the Thesis model includes within this most, if not all, of the Novus Ordo church, then this argument rests upon the assumption that the Novus Ordo church *is* the Catholic Church. However, *this is a conclusion that needs to be proven by the Thesis…* after all, the Thesis model argues that the Novus Ordo church professes a "new religion"6, and that its hierarchy lack valid orders7 – this gives it all of the aspects of a non-Catholic sect (as we have discussed more elsewhere).8 The conclusion that these non-Catholic "popes" and "cardinals" are legitimate parts of the Catholic hierarchy (even if merely "legally") and that those who recognise them constitute the Catholic

Church is not something that has yet been proven by the Thesis. Indeed, the Thesis endeavours to attempt to explain how such an organisation can be the Catholic Church. Therefore, this argument to prove the Thesis argument can only be appealed to if the Thesis argument *has already been proven.*

Thirdly, we read from the Thesis advocates that:

> "A papal election could be invalid because the proper rules of election have not been followed"9

However, this only applies to the election itself – not to the appointment of the electors (which was also invalid). We must therefore remember that these principles of convalidation need not only apply to an individual, isolated election; but they must apply to invalid elections which beget invalid appointments, which then beget invalid electors, which in turn beget invalid elections. We therefore have an entire system of invalidity and, therefore, *to sustain the argument we would have to conclude that all three solutions of the convalidation apply in a cascading effect throughout this entire system to validate it.*

That is to say, the convalidation would need to apply to the system in which non-cardinals themselves do not manifest the Catholic faith (and have therefore *not* been convalidated), and then invalidly elect non-popes who, for multiple generations, do not accept the Papacy (and have therefore *not* been convalidated), yet appoint more non-cardinals, who in turn perform an invalid election, and so on.

Therefore, the application of convalidation to this model is absurd. The possibility of saving one particular election from invalidity does not entail saving an entire, cyclical system from it.

Finally, given that according to the Thesis argument the non-pope – non-Cardinal cycle is *necessary* for the continuation of the Church, and if the potential validity of this cycle ultimately depends upon the general acceptance of people; i.e. the (flawed) *perception* of validity, we end with an utterly absurd conclusion in which the very existence of the Church is maintained by the flawed, subjective, perception of Catholics, and

therefore that this error ought to be continued… we have made more of this point in our section about the *Coloured Title Argument*.10

In sum, when applied to our current situation, far from solving the problem for the Thesis advocates, this appeal to convalidation only leads to more dilemmas and circular reasoning.

More generally, we think it is clear that Thesis advocates are attempting to apply the principle of convalidation far beyond its intended purposes. Whilst it is natural to have defects of validity in individual cases, and for the Church to posit particular solutions to these defects under special circumstances, it is another thing to conclude that these principles can apply to an *entire, multi-generational system of defect which keeps sustaining itself.*

1 Core Argument: 2. The Thesis is Void, Baseless, and Circular
2 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter X: On the Lack of Intention to Accept the Papacy, 3rd Article, n.22
3 Ibid (emphasis added)
4 For a thorough demonstration of this, read the full chapter cited above.
5 Bp. Sanborn, Explanation of the Thesis of Bishop Guérard des Lauriers, p.8 – it is here cited as a problem seen with what the Thesis advocates pejoratively call “Conclavism”. For more on this point, see the Core Argument: Section 5.
6 As one example, see: thethesis.us (2025) under: Being Here: General Overview: 1st Article, n.5
7 Most Reverend Donald J. Sanborn, Can Novus Ordo Baptisms be Trusted as Valid?, 2023, p.8
8 See: Additional Arguments: Canon 2314, Excommunication, and Non-Catholic Sects
9 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter X: On the Lack of Intention to Accept the Papacy, 3rd Article, n.22
10 The Coloured Title Argument (or, “Schroedinger’s Church”)

On Jurisdiction and Apostolic Succession

Whilst the issues of Jurisdiction and Apostolic succession are often presented as essential to the Thesis arguments, we have nonetheless decided to relegate our full treatments of them to this additional section. This is because the arguments we make here are not absolutely necessary to show the falsity of the Thesis argument; our core argument has already dealt with the root issue: how to elect a new pope. Thus, we have already spoken to the core of this question because, from the point of view of the Thesis, the ability to elect a new pope represents the continuation of Jurisdiction and Apostolic Succession; that is to say, with the very capacity to elect a new, true pope, both Jurisdiction and Apostolic Succession are ensured.

We have already shown how the Thesis itself is not a valid argument for how to elect a new pope1, and we have also demonstrated that alternative models are possible.2 Nonetheless, we foresee that Thesis advocates will claim that we have not properly accounted for Jurisdiction and Apostolic Succession, continuing to insist that their model is the only way to ensure these. Therefore, we will now examine the issue in more detail.

We will here show that the question of Jurisdiction offers no support to the Thesis argument, nor does it invalidate alternatives. Instead, we will demonstrate that using the argument from Jurisdiction in support of the Thesis argument leads to still more circular reasoning; not only must it continue with the false insistence that cardinals are necessary, but the idea that the Novus Ordo clergy can continue to pass-on legal titles amongst themselves begs the question of how they received such titles to begin with.

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Firstly, let us clarify the nature of the argument. Here is how the Catholic Encyclopedia outlines Apostolicity and Apostolic Succession:

> "**Apostolicity is the mark** by which the Church of today is recognized as identical with the Church founded by Jesus Christ upon the Apostles. **It is of great importance because it is the surest indication of the true Church of Christ**, it is most easily

> examined, and it virtually contains the other three marks, namely, Unity, Sanctity, and Catholicity…
>
> Apostolicity of mission means that the Church is one moral body, possessing the mission entrusted by Jesus Christ to the Apostles, and transmitted through them and their lawful successors in an unbroken chain to the present representatives of Christ upon earth. **This authoritative transmission of power in the Church constitutes Apostolic succession.** This Apostolic succession must be both **material and formal**; the **material consisting in the actual succession in the Church, through a series of persons** from the Apostolic age to the present; **the formal adding the element of authority in the transmission of power.** It consists in the legitimate transmission of the ministerial power conferred by Christ upon His Apostles. No one can give a power which he does not possess. **Hence in tracing the mission of the Church back to the Apostles, no lacuna can be allowed, no new mission can arise; but the mission conferred by Christ must pass from generation to generation through an uninterrupted lawful succession.**"3

Therefore, it is clear: Apostolic Succession is necessary; it is part of the fundamental identity of the Church and must be accounted for. Moreover, it is not *only* to be found in valid orders (this is why the Eastern Orthodox and the early Anglicans did not have Apostolic Succession, despite their valid orders). Instead, full Apostolic Succession requires the passing-down of valid orders (the *matter*), as well as the transmission of authority (the *form*).

The author of the original Thesis stated:

> "While Apostolicity is a mark, permanent like the Church itself. It is therefore absolutely necessary to maintain the mark, without which apostolic succession would OBJECTIVELY be interrupted."4

And a prominent Thesis advocate states:

> "THE THESIS affirms that the suppleance of jurisdiction in "Vatican II popes" is the only way to guarantee the continuity of the Church as an organization **juridically constituted**."5

Therefore, we can see why the issue of Jurisdiction becomes relevant... Jurisdiction is:

> "The right to guide and rule the Church of God."6

That is to say, the authority to guide and rule the Church must be accounted for.

Very simply: Apostolic Succession must continue and be accounted for.

The matter of Apostolic Succession is *valid orders*, and

The form of Apostolic Succession is *Jurisdiction* (and the ability to transmit it).

How do we account for the Apostolic matter of valid orders?

Easily. It is evident that valid orders still exist because valid Bishops have been ordained with the valid matter and form.

How we account for the Apostolic form of Jurisdiction?

Easily. It ultimately exists in Christ (and always will).

That is, in the final analysis, all there need be to the argument.

We will not here examine in detail all of the Thesis arguments which claim or even allude to the idea that Jurisdiction must be maintained within and passed through the Novus Ordo hierarchy. It is sufficient to show that such an idea is absurd, even by the Thesis advocate's own arguments.

After all, there are only two types of Jurisdiction that Thesis advocates deal with:

- Ordinary Jurisdiction, and
- Supplied Jurisdiction.

They will readily admit that there is currently no Ordinary Jurisdiction. Given that Ordinary Jurisdiction is born of a legitimate election to a particular office of a diocese, Thesis advocates, including their Bishops, will readily admit that no one possesses this kind of Jurisdiction at present because the "Novus Ordo bishops" lack valid appointments and the remaining, valid Bishops do not have appointments to dioceses. Therefore, there is no reason to state that Ordinary Jurisdiction must be accounted for.

Therefore, they invoke Supplied Jurisdiction:

> "The jurisdiction necessary for the functioning of the Church as an institution is **supplied** by Christ **when ordinary jurisdiction is lacking**, since the common good of the Church requires it."7

Therefore, according to this argument, Jurisdiction does not exist in a particular office, but must indeed be held in the hands of Christ, ready to supply for particular acts that require it.

We have already dealt with the claims about necessary acts in the core argument.8 This approach of the Thesis advocates to Jurisdiction is used to support the conclusion that this Jurisdiction must be supplied to the "cardinals" and the "Vatican II popes" because only they can perform the necessary act of election. However, we have already shown this to be false.9

The last avenue of argument, therefore, is for Thesis advocates to claim that the remaining, legitimate Bishops cannot receive such Supplied Jurisdiction to perform the necessary act of election because they claim that Supplied Jurisdiction can only be given to a cleric with a *legal title*… The claim is:

> "The jurisdiction which is ordered to the government of the Church (whether ordinary, delegated, or supplied) requires a legal title, which can only be obtained by election or convalidation."10

Not only is this claim based on a very loose appeal to one discussion made by one theologian who is claimed to have been discussing this

question in relation to a different issue11, but the argument itself leads to even more circular reasoning:

- It therefore entails that the “cardinals” and “Vatican II popes” do have legal titles.
- However, they can only receive these titles from each-other.
- Yet, where do they get their legal titles from, and who has the right to give them if they *do not have any authority?*
- The answer must be that they get the authority Supplied to them in order to bestow these titles.
- However, one must *already have* a legal title before they can receive Supplied authority to bestow one,
- And so on, and so forth…

In a word, the logic is that these “cardinals” and “Vatican II popes” must already have Supplied Jurisdiction to give legal titles which allow them to receive Supplied Jurisdiction. Therefore, the argument is circular.

Moreover, Apostolic Succession consists of *matter* and *form*: the *matter* of valid ordinations, and the *form* of true authority. Without both matter and form, there is no Apostolic Succession. The current “cardinals” lack valid orders (as have the “Vatican II popes”). Therefore, there is no *matter* of Apostolic Succession. Therefore, they cannot be part of Apostolic Succession.

Moreover, Supplied Jurisdiction only applies in cases of necessity. As we have shown, the appeal to cardinals as necessary is also circular.12

Moreover, the necessary *act* itself is the election because it is indeed true that the Church must be able to maintain the Papacy. However, as we have already seen, Thesis advocates contradict each other as to whether the act of election is an *act of Jurisdiction:*

> “The right of electing is **not jurisdiction or authority.** The right of electing the person to receive authority **is not an authority or jurisdiction**, because those who have this right, do not necessarily have the right of making a law.”13

The final recourse Thesis advocates might have is to make a loose appeal to an argument from “coloured titles” in which these “cardinals” and “Vatican II popes” continue to reside in the legal order simply due to prolonged, common error. However, this argument devolves into another, utterly absurd conclusion which we will explain in full elsewhere.14

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In sum, the question of Apostolic Succession and Jurisdiction was not necessary to address for our central argument because it was sufficient to address the possibility of a papal election in the case of the extinction of the college of Cardinals.

Nonetheless, Thesis advocates might claim that their model alone can truly ensure the integrity of Apostolic Succession and Jurisdiction. This is false because their apparent proofs for this ultimately come back to circular arguments about the necessity of cardinals, whilst already assuming a level of legal legitimacy for the Novus Ordo clergy that does not exist, especially due to their lack of valid orders.

If the claim is that Supplied Jurisdiction cannot be supplied to anyone else, this is also demonstrably false. If we take the remaining, valid Bishops as our example, if the Thesis advocates ask: how do you explain how such Bishops could gain the authority to elect a pope? Our answer is: in the same way that you explain it: it is Supplied to them by Christ. **The difference of course being that in the case of the Thesis advocates, they are insisting that this power must be supplied to invalid clerics, who are public adherents to a non-Catholic religion, and who do not even possess the basic matter of Apostolic Succession (that is, valid orders). Whereas, we are at least suggesting that Supplied Jurisdiction could be granted to valid Bishops who profess the True Faith and who have valid orders, and it could be granted to them for the necessary *act* of electing a new pope.**

Until such a time, the *matter* of Apostolic Succession continues amongst them, and the ultimate *form* of Apostolic Succession remains with Our Lord Jesus Christ, as it does each time the Papacy experiences an interregnum.

1 Core argument: 2. The Thesis is Void, Baseless, and Circular, & 3. On the Impossibility of a “Material” Pope, & 4. On the Question of Heresy
2 Core argument: 5. On Alternative Solutions
3 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “Apostolicity”, 1913 edition. (emphasis added)
4 Bp. Guérard des Lauriers, An Extract from Sodalitium No. 13: https://www.sodalitiumpianum.com/interview-bishop-guerard/
5 Rev. N. Despósito, The Little Catechism on The Thesis, n. 11 (emphasis added)
6 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction”, 1913 edition.
7 Rev. N. Despósito, The Little Catechism on The Thesis, n. 10
8 Core Argument: 2. The Thesis is Void, Baseless, and Circular & Core Argument 5. On Alternative Solutions
9 Ibid.
10 Rev. N. Despósito, The Little Catechism on The Thesis, n. 12
11 Here is the full footnote (of ibid): “The theologian Joannes de Lugo, responding to the objection of an adversary who is trying to justify the suppleance of temporal power in a tyrant by equating this to the case of suppleance of jurisdiction in an usurper of the papacy, teaches that the papal usurper cannot receive power either from Christ or from the Church because of the lack of a legal title which can only be granted by implicit or explicit designation (my emphasis). Joannes de Lugo, Disputationes Scholasticae et Morales (Tom. 7), Paris, 1893.” – Therefore, the author has made an appeal to a discussion de Lugo had somewhere in the entire 7th volume of his work. We have therefore been unable to verify the exact location of this very specific claim, which is the only given proof of the argument.
12 Core Argument: 2. The Thesis is Void, Baseless, and Circular
13 Bp. Donald Sanborn, On Being a Pope Materially, n.15 (emphasis added)
14 Additional Argument: The Coloured Title Argument (or, “Schroedinger’s Church”)

The Coloured Title Argument (or, “Schroedinger’s Church”)

In the Core Argument and in our Additional Arguments, we have refuted the Thesis by showing how the “cardinals” lack the ability to elect and appoint because they lack valid orders, have not received their own, legitimate appointments and are not part of the Catholic hierarchy. We have also shown that cardinals are not absolutely necessary for a papal election.1

Nonetheless, Thesis advocates may try to argue that these illegitimate elections and appointments will still become valid because the “cardinals” and “Vatican II popes” have *coloured titles*, which validate their actions due to common error. Here is their argument:

> “**13. Is it possible that the elections of “Vatican II popes” have in fact been invalid, and thus unable to grant a true title?**
>
> Yes. It is not outside the realm of possibility that some or all papal elections since the death of Pope Pius XII were *invalid* and therefore unable to grant a *true title* to the papacy. In the practical order, however, *this would change nothing*. In the absence of a true title it is evident that “Vatican II popes” would possess a colored title.
>
> A dictionary of Catholic theology explains:
>
> **3) [*colored titles* have] all the appearances, the colors, of validity but which in reality has no value or effect, by reason of a hidden defect…**
>
> However, in the case of a common error, the Church declares to supply the jurisdiction. Cf. Canon 209. For a greater reason, **if there is a *colored* title, the common error will happen almost automatically and will produce the same effects as a true and legitimate title.”**2

The piece continues…

> “A colored title depends upon perception. How many of the 1.3 billion Catholics perceive that the current occupant of the See of Peter is not the pope? Traditional Catholics are less than 0.1 percent of the total of baptized Catholics. Sedevacantists are *a*

minority among Traditional Catholics. And a great number of Sedevacantists hold THE THESIS."3

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Let us review the logic of this argument…

- Firstly, the "cardinals" and "Vatican II popes" lack *true titles*, and so cannot be supplied jurisdiction to perform any valid acts.
- However, they have "*coloured titles*" because they *appear* to have received valid appointments and elections.
- Actions performed under *coloured titles* become valid in cases of **common error**; that is to say, when a majority of people mistakenly perceive a cleric and their actions to be valid, that faulty perception allows the actions to be valid (for the security of the faithful).
- Therefore, this would allow the "cardinals" and "Vatican II popes" to perform the necessary actions of appointing and electing.

Note: this therefore returns to the claim that cardinals are necessary for elections, which we have already refuted.4 Therefore, because this principle is false, the edifice of this argument is already false, but we will proceed to show its other errors.

- Therefore, according to this argument, the current "cardinals" and "Vatican II popes" may indeed lack true titles, but they may be allowed to perform certain acts as if they have true titles **and the entire edifice of this model is based upon the continued, common, erroneous belief that these men are true "cardinals" and true "popes" with valid elections, appointments, and titles.**
- **Moreover** – according to Thesis advocates – this system is necessary for the continuation of the Church! *If we lack this cycle of appointment and election amongst the "cardinals" and "Vatican II popes", the Church loses its power of performing a valid papal election, and therefore its jurisdiction, and therefore cannot be the Church of Christ.*

Therefore, here is the utterly absurd conclusion that this argument leads to: the existence of the Church of Christ is maintained by the continued *error* of the people and their continued *false* belief that these "cardinals" and "Vatican II popes" are valid.

That is no hyperbole. Consider the logic again:

According to this argument, the common error validates the ability of these invalid men to elect and appoint, both of which are apparently necessary for the Church within this framework. Therefore, common error is *necessary* to sustain the Church. If, therefore, a day should come when a majority of Catholics recognised that these "cardinals" lack valid orders or that the "Vatican II popes" have not been validly elected, there would be no more common error. Yet, if there is no more common error, these invalid men cannot perform valid acts, and if they cannot perform valid acts, what is necessary for the Church ceases to be.

It would therefore follow that it would be an absolute necessity of the highest order for Catholics to avoid the truth and to perpetually cease to recognise the invalidity of the Novus Ordo hierarchy, lest the Church should collapse. It is therefore like Schroedinger's Church: whilst everyone is in common error, the Church continues to exist, but the moment enough Catholics "look inside the box" and realise the truth of the matter, the Church would then pop out of existence.5

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Aside from the argument given above, the other argument for a coloured titled given by Thesis advocates is made with an appeal to history:

> "Applying these principles to the crisis of the Great Western Schism, for example, Wilmers says that if all the popes during the Great Western Schism had been dubious, Christ would have supplied jurisdiction to every one of them by reason of a colored title. He also clarifies that *not all acts of jurisdiction were valid*, but only those which were necessary for the government of the faithful. Analogically, the "Vatican II popes" do not receive supplied power indiscriminately, but only inasmuch as it is necessary for the common good of the Church."6

Therefore, the argument is that jurisdiction could have been supplied to one or all of the anti-popes during the Great Western Schism due to coloured titles.

Of course, in answer we return to the argument that this is for necessary acts and the Thesis-model is not necessary.

Furthermore, there is a great difference between this situation and our own. In this situation, the common error was transient and applied to men who at least had valid orders and professed the Catholic faith. The error was confined to a single generation and, most importantly, **the removal of error would not have posited any kind of problem**. In fact, quite the opposite.

In our current situation, the common error is consistent and long-standing; it is being applied to men who lack valid orders and who profess an anti-Catholic religion… the error is multi-generational; cyclical, and most importantly, **the error is ultimately to be seen as necessary for maintaining a solution.**

We hope that the absurdity of this is clear. It appears to us to reveal a common error with Thesis thinking: attempting to find legal loopholes that go against common sense and clear Divine, moral law which appear innocuous at first, but end in nonsense.

1 Core Argument: 2. The Thesis is Void, Baseless, and Circular, & Core Argument: 4. On the Question of Heresy
2 Rev. N. Despósito, The Little Catechism on The Thesis, n. 13,
The reference given for the dictionary of Catholic Theology is:
Dictionnaire de théologie catholique (DTC), “Titre”, III. Titre de juridiction.
3 Ibid.
4 Core Argument: 2. The Thesis is Void, Baseless, and Circular, & Core Argument: 5. On Alternative Solutions
5 Schroedinger was a physicist who posited a famous thought experiment dealing with quantum states of matter; the idea being that a cat in a box with some quantum material would in fact be both alive and dead in a quantum state of potentiality. Yet, the cat would not in fact be dead until the box was opened because the very act of observation would collapse the wave function and determine the material reality. See a full explanation, here: https://www.britannica.com/science/Schrodingers-cat
6 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter XIII: On the Canonical Crime of Heresy, 3rd Article, n.25

A “Material” Pope as a “Being *Per-Accidens*”

We claimed in our core argument that a “material” pope cannot exist because it entails something nonsensical: a being which exists, although it is only *matter* not united to *form*.1

However, an argument might attempt to be made that some beings can exist without *matter* and *form*. At least one Thesis advocate makes this argument, which is as follows:

“In beings per accidens matter and form are able to be separated.

> In beings *per se*, for example a man, it is impossible that the person survives if matter and form be separated. Matter is not able to exist *actually* without substantial form. In beings *per accidens*, that is in those which arise from a conjunction of an accidental form with a substance (which becomes analogically material with regard to the accident), matter and form are able to be separated without the corruption of the suppositum — for example, a *white man*, or *grammarian*, or a *musician*.
>
> The pope, however, inasmuch as he is the pope, is a being *per accidens*, because he is an aggregation of many beings, namely of man on the one hand, and of many accidents on the other. Of these accidents some are merely dispositive, for example, sacerdotal ordination, episcopal consecration, etc. But one is formal, by which a certain man is denominated pope *simpliciter*, and this is the right of making a law, that is, authority or jurisdiction.”2

This is misleading because the entire framing misconstrues the relationship between *per se* and *per accidens* in Thomistic philosophy, as if there are such things which are “beings *per se*” by nature, or “beings *per accidens*” – as if that terminology applies to the essence of their being. That is why a man is presented as a “being *per se*” and a musician is presented as a “being *per accidens*”… but this is totally misleading. A musician can be both a “being per se” and a “being per

accidens" depending on what we are discussing; if we are talking about a man who happens to be a musician, we are discussing a being *per accidens*. Yet, if we are discussing a musician as-such, we are discussing a being *per se*. After all, if we are simply taking about *a man as a man*, he might be a musician accidentally – whether or not he is a musician is not essential. However, if we are talking about a musician *as a musician*, the fact of him being a musician is essential to his nature.

Per se and *per accidens* are not two different categories of beings (as individuals). Instead, *per se* is used to describe whatever is necessary to make a being what it is, whereas *per accidens* describes whatever is non-essential to that being…

From the Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy:

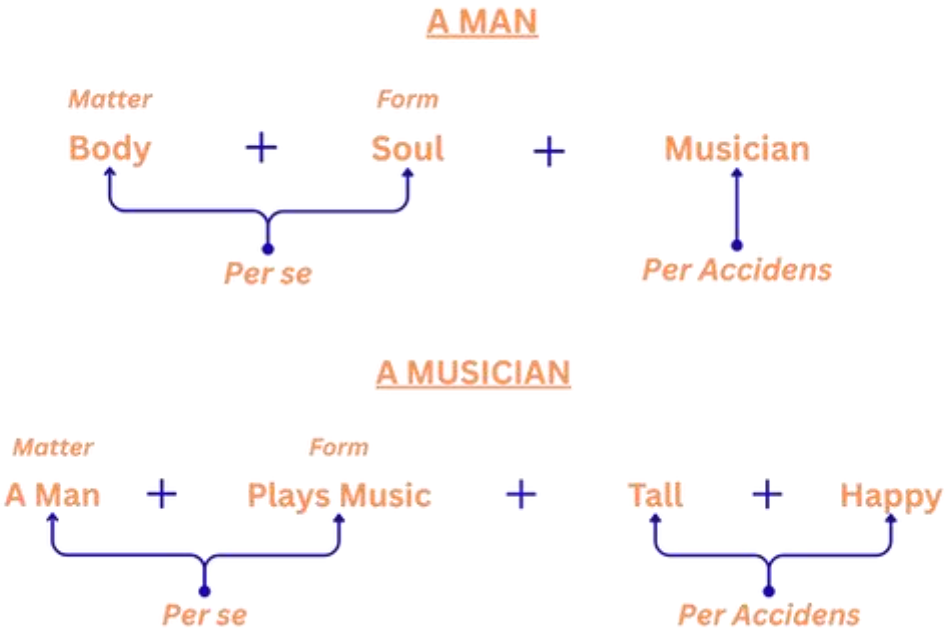
> "In scholastic thought that which is *per accidens* belongs to a substance more or less fortuitously, and is contrasted with that which is *per se*, or through itself, i.e. that springs from its inner or essential nature. Also in scholastic thought, that which is intended is *per se*, whereas that which comes about as a result of action but without being intended is *per accidens*."3

And from St. Thomas Aquinas:

> "A *per se* cause is said of one which is the cause of something as such, for example the builder is the cause of the house and the wood is the matter of the bench. A *per accidens* cause is said of one which happens to a *per se* cause. For example, we say that the grammarian builds; the grammarian is called the cause of the building *per accidens*, not in so far as he is a grammarian, but in so far as it happens to the builder that he is a grammarian; and it is similar in other causes."4

> "When we say that there are four causes we mean the *per se* causes, to which all the per accidens causes are reduced, because everything which is *per accidens* is reduced to that which is *per se*."5

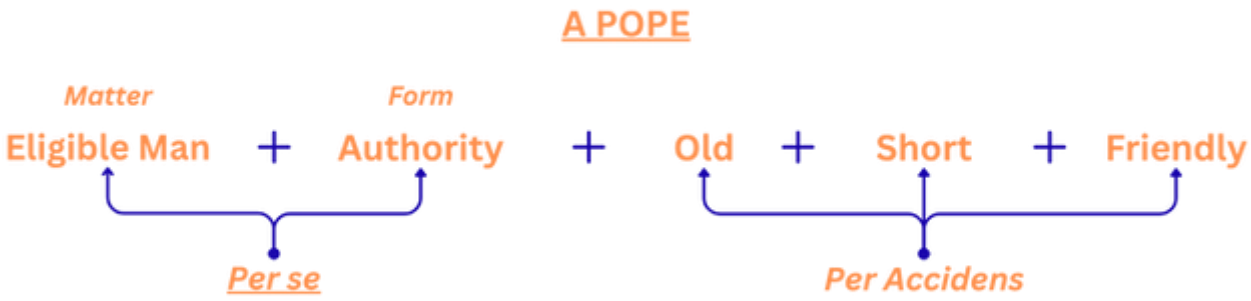
And so, that is to say, *per se* is what is essential to a core or substance. However, *per accidens* is just that: accidental. That is why when St. Thomas speaks of a grammarian building a house because the fact that he is a grammarian is purely accidental to the fact that he can build a house. However, the fact that is a builder is *per se* because that is the principal part his activity of building.



Likewise, if a musician is happy, then the fact that he is happy is accidental: *per accidens*. However, insofar as he makes music, he is a musician *per se* because a musician is essentially a man who makes music.

Therefore, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a "being *per accidens*"; there are simply elements of a particular being which are accidental (not essential to its nature, and therefore *per accidens*), and essential (necessary to make it what it is, and therefore *per se*).

Now, when we apply this to a pope it is clear to see that a pope – in so far as he is a pope – is a being *per se*; and *per se* he is the combination of matter and form: an eligible man, united with the authority of the Roman Pontiff. What is *per accidens* is merely all else which might be compatible with, but not essential to this… he might be a tall pope or short pope, loud pope or quiet pope; all *per accidens* because none of these things change the fact that he is a pope.



With all of this explained, we return to the original statement:

> "**In beings *per accidens* matter and form are able to be separated...** The pope, however, inasmuch as he is the pope, is a being *per accidens*"6

And our response should be clear:

This is false because there are no "beings *per accidens*" – there are only beings, and what is either *per se* to them or *per accidens*. Therefore, this concept does not apply to any being, including a pope. The pope *inasmuch* as he is the pope is a being *per se*.

1 Core Argument: 3. On the Impossibility of a "Material" Pope
2 Bp. Donald Sanborn, On Being a Pope Materially, n.18
3 The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy (2nd Edition), Simon Blackburn, 2008, see: "Per Accidens"
4 St. Thomas Aquinas, De Principiis Naturae. n.39
5 Ibid. n.21
6 Bp. Donald Sanborn, On Being a Pope Materially, n.18

A "Pope in the Womb"

Following our examination of the “material” pope concept, we demonstrated that the concept is nonsensical because it tries to posit a being that exists without both matter and form. We stated that the theologians cited by the Thesis advocates do not support their claim because their quotes only mention that an election is merely part of the matter of the Papacy. Nonetheless, Thesis advocates may proceed to claim that they are supported by theologians due to the following quote by Martin Bonacina:

> “Secondly, it does not follow that the Apostolic See is simply (*simpliciter*) vacant while the election has been made by the cardinals and the person elected has not yet given his consent... for even though the election has not yet achieved its full effect and the Apostolic See is not yet said to be occupied, for as long as the consent of the person elected has not followed; but the Apostolic See is not vacant on account of this, because the See is said to be vacant when it does not have a Pontiff in any way, **but in our case it does have a Pontiff in a certain way, since a pope has already been elected, and even though he has not yet been created, he nevertheless has been as though conceived and exists, so to speak, in the womb.”**1

Thesis advocates will therefore claim that if we accept these words of Bonacina to be true, we must conclude that a “material” pope is a true and meaningful concept because Bonacina is describing what the Thesis advocates describe: an individual who has received an election, who has not yet accepted, yet is still “a Pontiff in a certain way” because he has been “conceived”.

Our initial response to this is twofold: firstly, the issue that the elections of the “Vatican II popes” have not been valid.2 Second, that whilst Thesis advocates take Bonacina’s words to be proof of a truly exceptional entity, one that defies the laws of reality and logic (a being that exists without *matter* united to *form*), Bonacina is simply referring the *positive anticipation of the Church*, during the short interim after an election. **Bonacina’s words clearly do not apply to a prolonged refusal and thus they are inapplicable to the Thesis argument.**

Let us review Canon Law:

Canon 175:

> "The election should be communicated quickly to the one elected, who must **within at [most] eight useful days** from the reception of the information make known whether he consents to the election or **whether he refuses it; otherwise he loses all rights acquired from the election.**"3

Therefore, once there is an election there is a short period of **eight days** during which the elected individual has a right to the Papacy, but does not yet hold the Papacy (and is therefore not a pope). However, during this brief period, no election is prescribed by law (however, this does not lead to the conclusion that another election is categorically impossible). Therefore, after an election, there is an eight-day period during which the Church prudently anticipates the acceptance of the election, and thus the creation of the new pope. It is therefore very natural to think of the Church having a pope "in the womb" during this brief interim; it is a figurative way of expressing that positive anticipation.

However, this figurative language does not apply to prolonged periods during which an elected individual rejects the election for months or even years after the fact. Not only is such a situation impossible, but it goes against the very spirit of this positive anticipation.

We see as much reflected in the Thesis advocates' very own use of this metaphor, applied to the current situation:

> "Because the designation to authority differs in a real way from the authority itself, the designation is able to exist in a certain subject without authority, as has been said above. By analogy parents produce the proximate matter for receiving a human form, but they do not themselves infuse that form. In a similar way, the electors provide the proximate matter of the papacy, or of some ruler of society, but they do not supply the authority. If the matter which is produced by the parents is in some way indisposed to receiving the human form, it does not become a man, but is expelled from the body of the woman. Similarly if the electors supply some matter of

> authority, which nevertheless is indisposed to receiving the authority, he does not become the pope, but he is expelled, that is, the electors take away from him the designation. Furthermore by analogy, just as a woman who does not expel an indisposed fetus, becomes sick with infection, so the Church or society which does not expel matter which is indisposed to authority, becomes infected with the disease of confusion, because of the absence of authority. Furthermore if the cause of indisposition to authority is the will to promote heresy, then the institutions of the Church smell of the putrefied decay of heresy, because of the appearance of authority in him who is elected."4

We see from this that if we take the "womb" metaphor and extend it into the Thesis conclusion, we are presented with something deeply grotesque. Instead of having a positive anticipation of a pope, the "material" popes or "Vatican II popes" posited by the Thesis are like so many dead fetuses in the womb that *remain within the body of the Church*, whilst infecting and corrupting that body from within.

Therefore, in Bonacina's words we might anticipate the "birth" of a pope after an election as we anticipate his acceptance, during which time no other election is made. Yet, this is of course assuming that if the birth does not come to term, the elected individual is simply "expelled from the body", having lost all rights by law. However, the Thesis model insists that, instead of being removed, this individual *remains* in the "womb" of the Church, corrupting her from within.

We hope that it is clear that there is a great difference between these two positions: the former is sensible, natural, and conforms to Church law. The latter goes against Church law, and presents an utterly grotesque image of Holy Mother Church as a woman who does not keep herself spotless and clean, but who is, as we speak, deeply sick, infected and corrupted; at the mercy of malpractice and the persistent evils of heresy.

1 Bonacina, Tractatus de Legitima Summi Pontificis Electione, Venetiis 1638, Apud Petrum Turrinum, pp. 50-53; quoted in: thethesis.us (2025) Chapter X: On the Lack of Intention to Accept the Papacy, 2nd Article, n. 12

2 Core Argument: 2. The Thesis is Void, Baseless, and Circular

3 Code of Canon Law, 1917 Edition (emphasis added)
4 Bp. Donald Sanborn, On Being a Pope Materially, n.18

Canon 2314, Excommunication, and Non-Catholic Sects

In the body of our Core Argument, we discussed the fact that heretics are incompatible with Catholic clerical office according to Divine law, and lose their offices through tacit resignation according to Canon Law (Canon 188.4). Moreover, this occurs without the need for a warning or a declaration.1

Nonetheless, Thesis advocates invoke Canon 2314 with the implication that it entails automatic *excommunication* for heretics, *not* loss of office, and that Canon 188.4 only applies to one part of Canon 2314 (1:3).

However, the problem with this line of reasoning is that it frames the tacit renunciation of Canon 188.4 as if it only applies according to one part of Canon 2314.2 However, this is not true. It does not *only* apply to Canon 2314 (1:3), but *includes* it as an additional instance of tacit renunciation.

Firstly, let us read Canon 2314:

> "§ 1. All apostates from the Christian faith and each and every heretic or schismatic:
>
> 1.° **Incur by that fact excommunication**;
> 2.° Unless they respect warnings, they are deprived of benefice, dignity, pension, office,
> or other duty that they have in the Church, they are declared infamous, and [if]
> clerics, with the warning being repeated, [they are] **deposed**;
> 3.° If they give their names to non-Catholic sects or publicly adhere [to them], they are
> by that fact infamous, and with due regard for the prescription of Canon 188, n. 4,
> clerics, the previous warnings having been useless, are degraded.

§ 2. **Absolution from the excommunication mentioned in § 1... is specially reserved to the Apostolic See… [or recovery by power of an Ordinary]**"3

We therefore see that the Canon states that *excommunication* is automatic for apostates, heretics, and schismatics. We should therefore review the definition of *excommunication*. We should also consider the definition of *tacit resignation*…

Excommunication:

> *"A censure by which a Christian is excluded from communion with the faithful within the limits determined by the law… Clerics who have incurred excommunication are moreover forbidden… to receive dignities, offices, benefices, pensions and orders"4*

Tacit Resignation:

> *Effects the vacancy of a cleric's office without any need for a declaration or other formalities. All that is required is that the relevant acts are performed.5*

Deposition and *degradation* are further penalties that entail even more severe punishment than excommunication and loss of office.6

Therefore, in light of these definitions, it is clear that according to both Canons: 188.4 and 2314, the heresy (or apostasy) of a cleric causes both *tacit resignation* and *excommunication* automatically (ipso facto); that is to say, the cleric automatically loses their office, and are cut-off from communion with the faithful, *and* are *forbidden* from receiving office.

Now, it is worth examining some more points:

Whilst under excommunication, a cleric cannot be appointed to office:

Canon 2265:

> "§ 1. Anyone excommunicated:

1.° Is prohibited from the right of electing, presenting, or appointing;
2.° **Cannot obtain** dignities, **offices**, benefices, ecclesiastical pensions, or other duties in the Church;
3.° Cannot be promoted to orders."7

Thesis advocates will point out that this does not apply to cardinals:

Canon 2227:

> "§ 2. Unless expressly named, Cardinals of the H. R. C. are not included under penal law..."8

However, as we have already seen, this does not apply to a tacit resignation because tacit resignation is not a part of penal law, as McDevitt explains:

> "While Cardinals are not subject to the penal law unless they are expressly mentioned, the writer believes **that they are subject to the prescriptions of canon 188** without any such special mention, since in his opinion **this canon is not a penal canon**."9

Moreover, we must also remember that cardinals are only cardinals insofar as they hold their offices. **Therefore, if they lose their offices through tacit resignation, they are no longer cardinals and *excommunication can (and does) apply to them.***

Therefore, we plainly see that Canon 188.4 and Canon 2314 work in conjunction with each other. The automatic loss of office mentioned in Canon 188.4 is directly mirrored in the automatic excommunication of Canon 2314 – both state that the clerical loss of office occurs ipso-facto for heretics, apostates and schismatics prior to any warning or declaration.

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Finally, Thesis advocates will argue that Canon 2314 (1:3) does not apply to the current Novus Ordo clergy:

> "In the present situation, we are not dealing with clergy who have joined or publicly adhered to a non-Catholic sect, such as the Lutheran Church, or the Anglican Church... On the contrary we are dealing with clergy who, despite the fact of saying heretical things, are very eager to claim that they are Catholics, and that they have authority, functions, and offices in the Catholic Church."10

This is a strange argument because it appears to deny the very definition of a non-Catholic sect:

> "...any Christian denomination which has set itself up independently of [the Catholic] Church is a **sect**. According to Catholic teaching **any Christians who, banded together refuse to accept the entire doctrine** or to acknowledge the supreme authority of the Catholic Church, constitute merely a religious party under human unauthorized leadership."11

Therefore, a non-Catholic sect can be defined as **a group of Christians who are "banded together" and refuse to accept the entire doctrine of the Church**. We can therefore define a sect as any group who profess a *shared heresy*.

This makes this Thesis argument particularly strange in light of their persistent claims that the Novus Ordo constitutes a "new religion":

> "...Vatican II and its subsequent reforms have given us a **new religion**, a religion which is substantially different from the Roman Catholic faith founded by Christ."12

That is to say, Thesis advocates will claim that the Novus Ordo church clearly deviates from Catholic doctrine, but that the members (particularly the clergy) who are collected together in adherence to this doctrine do not constitute a new, non-Catholic sect.

Not only does this go against the plain definition of a "sect" but to claim that the Novus Ordo church is not a sect because they regard themselves as Catholic is absurd. After all, this is a common practice amongst sects. As one key example, the Thesis advocates have claimed that the Novus

Ordo sect is not like the Anglican sect… however, the Anglicans called themselves Catholics.

For example, even in early works like the 1662 Anglican Book of Common Prayer, there are multiple instances in which the Anglican is to call himself “Catholic”, and to pray as a “Catholic” including this recitation from their Catechism:

> “I believe in the Holy **Catholic** Church…”13

Therefore, whether or not a particular sect and its members calls itself “Catholic” ought to be irrelevant to the facts of the matter: that, according to Church definition, a non-Catholic sect can be any group who deviate in any way from Catholic doctrine.

Therefore, the Novus Ordo church is demonstrably a non-Catholic sect, even according to the Thesis advocates’ recognition that they hold a “new religion”. Therefore, we can conclude that the Novus Ordo clergy publicly adhere to a non-Catholic sect.

Finally, we are aware that the Thesis advocates have claimed that this conclusion: that the Novus Ordo church is a non-Catholic sect, leads to seven “intrinsic contradictions”14. We will refute all seven of these claims in another section.15

1 Core Argument: 4. On the Question of Heresy
2 This argument is made most explicitly in: thethesis.us (2025) Chapter XIII: On the Canonical Crime of Heresy, 2nd Article, n.19
3 Code of Canon Law, 1917 Edition (emphasis added)
4 Rev. Matthew Ramstein, Manual of Canon Law, 1947, pp.686-687, this is also made explicit in Canon 2265: Code of Canon Law, 1917
5 Rev. Gerald V. McDevitt, Doctor of Canon Law, The Renunciation of an Ecclesiastical Office, 1946 p.113
6 Rev. Matthew Ramstein, Manual of Canon Law, 1947, pp.692-693
7 Code of Canon Law, 1917 Edition (emphasis added)
8 Code of Canon Law, 1917 Edition
9 Rev. Gerald V. McDevitt, Doctor of Canon Law, The Renunciation of an Ecclesiastical Office, 1946 p.115

10 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter XIII: On the Canonical Crime of Heresy, 3rd Article, n.22
11 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “Election of the Popes”, 1913 edition. (emphasis added)
12 As one example, see: thethesis.us (2025) under: Being Here: General Overview: 1st Article, n.5
13 Anglican Book of Common Prayer, 1662, under: “A Catechism”
14 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter XIII: On the Canonical Crime of Heresy, 8th Article, n.62
15 Additional Argument: Of the Novus Ordo Sect and Seven Refutations

Cajetan and Ordinary Jurisdiction

In our Core Argument, we presented the following quote from Cardinal Thomas Cajetan to show theological support for the idea of an imperfect general council:1

> “...if the college of **cardinals were extinguished**, the **right to elect** the pope would be returned to the clergy of Rome, and **then for the universal Church in a general council.**”2

In light of this, prominent Thesis advocate Father Ricossa states:

> “We have seen that, in extraordinary cases, the pope can, in the absence of cardinals, be elected by the 'universal Church'; but what does Cardinal Cajetan mean by this term? …The universal Church and the Council are one.”3

Therefore, Father Ricossa draws the conclusion that the Council and the universal Church are one in this context, according to Cajetan. This we concede because the definition is tautological in this context; when we consider a general council, it is the representative of the Universal Church.

However, Father Ricossa proceeds with:

> “**Bishops without jurisdiction cannot elect the pope**. We have seen that in abnormal circumstances the election of the pope - according to the thought of the theologians who have dealt with the question - falls to the imperfect General Council, in other words to

> the Bishops and prelates who enjoy, in the Church itself, jurisdiction. The pope is, in fact, Bishop of the universal Church: it is therefore normal that exceptionally it is the prelates of the universal Church governing, like him and below him, a portion of the flock who elect him. We have also seen that by the very nature of things, and as a consequence of what has been said, are excluded from the number of electors per accidens of the pope, titular Bishops, Bishops consecrated with the Roman mandate but deprived of jurisdiction in the Church.
>
> A fortiori are excluded from the number of electors - precisely because they are excluded from the General Council - Bishops consecrated without a Roman mandate under the exceptional conditions of the current (formal) vacancy of the Apostolic See… Being deprived of jurisdiction, they do not belong to the hierarchy of the Church according to jurisdiction, for which they are not ex officio members of the Council and are therefore not entitled to validly elect the pope, not even in cases extraordinary."4

That is to say, the claim is that Bishops who have not received Ordinary Jurisdiction do not belong to the "hierarchy of the Church", and therefore cannot be part of a Council, and therefore cannot perform a valid election. Father Ricossa's conclusion is simply false for at least three reasons.

Firstly, Canon Law states that Bishops without Ordinary Jurisdiction can cast a legitimate vote in council (in particular, titular Bishops):

Canon 223:

> § 2. Also, titular Bishops called to the Council obtain a deliberative vote, unless it is expressly determined otherwise in the convocation.5

Secondly, Doctor of the Church St. Alphonsus Liguori explicitly states that during such a council, authority for election does not come through the pope, but directly from Christ:

> "...in the absence of a pope the general council receives the supreme power immediately from Christ"6

Thirdly, and most significantly, Father Ricossa's conclusion invalidates the Thesis argument that he is trying to support. This is because *no cleric currently has Ordinary Jurisdiction*. Moreover, if Jurisdiction for an election must *only* come through the pope, and if we simply do not have a pope, and if all of the "Vatican II popes" have not been popes, then *it follows that it is impossible to perform a valid election of any kind.*

After all, the basis for the Thesis argument is the false claim that the invalid "cardinals" and "Vatican II popes" can maintain a cycle of election because it is a necessity in extraordinary circumstances. This *does not* and *cannot* be made from the argument of Ordinary Jurisdiction coming to clerics from the valid appointment of a true Roman Pontiff (because we have not had one). Therefore, if the argument is that an election cannot be performed without Ordinary Jurisdiction, even in extraordinary cases, the Thesis must be invalid. We have dealt with the question of Jurisdiction more elsewhere.7

If, therefore, such an argument is used to invalidate an alternative to the Thesis, it must invalidate the Thesis itself. Therefore, either the argument is void, or the Thesis is void (or both).

1 Core Argument: 2. The Thesis is Void, Baseless, and Circular, & Core Argument: 5. On Alternative Solutions
2 Cardinal T. Cajetan, Tractatus de comparatione auctoritatis Pape et Concilii seu Ecclesie universalis, 13,742,745. (emphasis added)
3 Don (Father) Ricossa, The Election of the Pope, Sodalitium extract n.54 and n.55
4 Ibid.
5 Code of Canon Law, 1917 Edition
6 Full quote: "It should first be noted that the superiority of the Pope over the council does not extend to the dubious Pope in the time of a schism when there is a serious doubt about the legitimacy of his election; because then everyone must submit to the council, as defined by the Council of Constance. Then indeed the General Council draws its supreme power directly from Jesus Christ, as in times of vacancy of the Apostolic See, as it was well said by St. Antoninus." S. Alphonsus de Liguori, Du Pape et Du Concile, (Trns. Fr. Jules Jacques),1869, p.439
7 Additional Argument: On Jurisdiction and Apostolic Succession

Repentant Heretics do not Reclaim Office

As we have established within the Core Argument1 and within these Additional Arguments2, heretics cannot hold office due to Divine law; this separation between heretic and ecclesiastical office is not a result of applied penalities, but is automatic and results from the very nature of heresy itself.

Nonetheless, there may be a lingering notion that, if heresy results in an automatic loss of office, a renunciation results in an automatic return to an office. **This is false.** And we will show this to be false for multiple reasons.

However, before we proceed, it is worth noting: **for our present situation and the discussion about the "Vatican II popes", the invalid "cardinals" and the rest of the Novus Ordo hierarchy, the question of returning to office does not apply because such individuals never held legitimate Catholic office to begin with. However, assuming that they have received valid Baptisms, such individuals still have the possibility of becoming repentant heretics. Therefore, we here consider the general question of whether a repentant heretic can hold office after reconciliation.**

Therefore, for our current argument, we do not already presume that a particular Novus Ordo "bishop" legitimately held Catholic office. Instead, we take the argument as a hypothetical: even if such an individual did hold the valid office of Bishop before becoming a heretic, such an individual would not resume office upon renouncing their heresy.

There are four ways to demonstrate this argument:

i) According to logic and moral principle,
ii) Automatic Excommunication (via heresy) is reserved to the Holy See or Power of an Ordinary,
iii) It is supported by Church documents, and Councils
iv) It is supported by Church theologians.

—

i) Upon repentance, heretics do not resume office according to logic and moral principle.

According to logic and moral principle, a heretical cleric, once repentant, ought not be entrusted with the formation, guidance, and general shepherding of souls. This is because, by their former public heresy, they have proven themselves to be untrustworthy with the care of souls, having previously been such a grave danger to them.

Of course, there is a universe of difference between stating that a repentant individual is untrustworthy, and stating that they are beyond the reach of divine mercy. We do not here argue, in any way, that such individuals cannot reconcile their own souls with God. Instead, the argument is that, even if they do repent and reconcile their souls with God in the internal forum (which is what every Catholic hopes for all heretics), that does not automatically prove that they can be trusted in the external forum. In fact, we would assume that the more powerful and true a heretic's repentance may be, the more likely they would be to recognise this principle.

This can be clarified with a few comparisons…

Perhaps there is a care-worker given the charge of children, yet they use their trusted position to corrupt and abuse children (and thus, plunge themselves into profound mortal sin). God's infinite grace can reach such a person, so we all know that they may repent of these sins and be transformed. Nonetheless, even if such a transformation were sincere, and even if it seemed evident to all around this person, it would be clear to all that this person should never be entrusted with the care of children again. Indeed, they ought to go to prison or undergo some other severe punishment. If they have any remaining time and energy to serve God, their efforts should clearly be placed elsewhere…

Likewise for a doctor: if a doctor has long used their position of trust to corrupt and harm their patients, it is clear that once this is discovered, this

doctor should never be entrusted with such care again, even if they are sincerely repentant for the evil they have done.

Thus, given that this moral principle is so clear for the care of innocents and the health of bodies, it is clearly applicable to the care of souls, which clerical heretics pose such a grave danger to.

Whether locally or globally, the Novus Ordo religion and its clerics have done untold harm to souls.

ii) Upon repentance, heretics do not resume office because they are excommunicated, and excommunication is reserved to the Holy See or Power of an Ordinary.

This is an argument that we have already demonstrated elsewhere in our Additional Arguments.3

In summary, Canon 2314 of the Code of Canon Law states that:

> "§ 1. All apostates from the Christian faith and each and every heretic or schismatic:
> 1.° Incur by that fact excommunication;"4

And that…

> § 2. Absolution from the excommunication mentioned in § 1... is specially reserved to the Apostolic See… [or recovery by power of an Ordinary]"5

Therefore, heretics are automatically excommunicated, and:

> *"**Clerics who have incurred excommunication are moreover forbidden**… to receive dignities, **offices**, benefices, pensions and **orders**"6*

Therefore, it is clear that, having been automatically excommunicated, such heretical clerics are **forbidden from receiving offices** and that this excommunication can only be lifted by the pope or an Ordinary.

Therefore, repentance does not restore a heretic to office according to Canon Law.

It is also worth emphasising again that, due to our current situation, we have no pope and no appointed Ordinaries. Therefore, no excommunications can be lifted either by the pope himself or an Ordinary superior.

iii) Upon repentance, heretics do not resume office because this principle is expressed in Church documents and Councils.

It is also for this reason that we can conclude that the principle is not merely penal. That is to say, the principle that heretics are not restored to office upon repentance is not merely a penalty *applied* by the Church; instead, it is a consequence that follows from the very nature of heresy, much like the consequence of *tacit resignation*, which is not a penalty (strictly speaking), but nonetheless separates the heretic from their office *ipso facto*, or *by the very fact*.

Likewise, we can conclude that heretics are not restored to office upon repentance not as a result of an applied penalty but due to the nature of heresy. The reason that we can conclude this is because the principle has been expressed by the Church throughout the ages; and being perpetual (even eternal), the principle has the character of something permanent, not of a merely transient penalty suited to a particular instance in time. This brings us to our discussion of the most contentious Church document on this issue: the Papal Bull *Cum Ex Apostolatus Officio*, written by Pope Paul IV in 1559:

Cum Ex Apostolatus Officio:

The reason why this Bull is contentious, and its significance is argued against by the Thesis advocates, is because it is a penal Bull, which some claim to be dogmatic. The Thesis advocates argue that because it is penal and not dogmatic, the kinds of effects it lists must be merely penal, only suited for a particular time, and are no longer relevant (because the Bull is no longer in force).7

However, this presentation of the Bull is misleading. The fact is that it is penal does not mean it is *merely* penal. Instead, it is a penal Bull *which contains reflections of Divine law.*

After all, *Cum Ex Apostolatus Officio* deals with *all* consequences for heretics and all deviants from the faith, including the penalties which are subject to change. However, even if some (or even most) of these consequences are penalities subject to change, it does not follow that all are. Some may also be truly perpetual. We here posit that the principle: repentant heretics do not return to office is one such perpetual consequence reflected in *Cum Ex Apostolatus Officio:*

> "(ii) that, moreover, [heretics] shall be unfit and incapable in respect of these things and that they shall be held to be backsliders and subverted in every way, just as if they had previously abjured heresy of this kind in public trial; **that they shall never at any time be able to be restored, returned, reinstated or rehabilitated to their former status** or Cathedral, Metropolitan, Patriarchal and Primatial Churches, or the Cardinalate, or other honour, any other dignity...
>
> ...6. In addition, [by this Our Constitution, which is to **remain valid in perpetuity We enact, determine, decree** and define:-] that if ever at any time it shall appear that any Bishop, even if he be acting as an Archbishop, Patriarch or Primate; or any Cardinal of the aforesaid Roman Church, or, as has already been mentioned, any legate, or even the Roman Pontiff, prior to his promotion or his elevation as Cardinal or Roman Pontiff, has deviated from the Catholic faith or fallen into some heresy:
>
> (i) the promotion or elevation, even if it shall have been uncontested and by the unanimous assent of all the Cardinals, shall be null, void and worthless;
>
> (ii) **it shall not be possible for it to acquire validity** (nor for it to be said that it has thus acquired validity) through the acceptance of the office, of consecration, of subsequent authority, nor through possession of administration, nor through the putative enthronement of a Roman Pontiff, or Veneration, or obedience accorded to such

by all, nor through the lapse of any period of time in the foregoing situation;

(iii) **it shall not be held as partially legitimate in any way;**

(iv) to any so promoted to be Bishops, or Archbishops, or Patriarchs, or Primates or elevated as Cardinals, or as Roman Pontiff, **no authority shall have been granted, nor shall it be considered to have been so granted either in the spiritual or the temporal domain;**

(v) each and all of their words, deeds, actions and enactments, howsoever made, and anything whatsoever to which these may give rise, shall be without force and shall grant no stability whatsoever nor any right to anyone;

(vi) **those thus promoted or elevated shall be deprived automatically, and without need for any further declaration, of all dignity, position, honour, title, authority, office and power**."8

These statements of Pope Paul IV have been repeated elsewhere, even in earlier documents, as we will see...

The Meaning of Deposition & Degradation

Before we proceed, we must review the definition of the terms "Deposition" and "Degradation", which are as follows:
Deposition:

"This penalty is more severe than privation of office. It includes suspension, privation of all offices and benefices which the cleric may have, and disqualification for any future office or benefice."9

Degradation:

"This is the severest of all vindictive penalties. ***It adds to deposition the perpetual privation of the clerical garb****, and of clerical privileges.* ***In other words the cleric is reduced to the lay state****, as the term implies…"10*

Therefore, whenever we read of “deposition” or “degradation” as applied to clerics, it means the perpetual *inability to resume office*; i.e. the principle being argued for – a deposed or degraded cleric cannot resume office.

The Fourth Lateran Council

Centuries before Cum Ex Apostolatus Officio, the Fourth Lateran Council expressed similar consequences for heretics:

> “We excommunicate and anathematize every heresy raising itself up against this holy, orthodox and catholic faith which we have expounded above. **We condemn all heretics, whatever names they may go under.** They have different faces indeed but their tails are tied together inasmuch as they are alike in their pride. Let those condemned be handed over to the secular authorities present, or to their bailiffs, for due punishment. **Clerics are first to be degraded from their orders**.”11

Therefore, we see that the council states that degradation is to be the first penalty that the Church should apply to heretical clerics.

The Council of Ephesus

A millennium before Pope Paul IV, The Council of Ephesus dealt with the Nestorian heresy, and thus spoke of the followers of Nestorius:

> “If **any** clerics should apostatise and in **private or in public** dare to hold the views of Nestorius or Celestius, it is thought right that such should stand **deposed** by the holy synod.”12

> ...if any should be discovered, whether bishops, clergy or laity, thinking or teaching the views expressed in his statement by the priest Charisius about the incarnation of the only-begotten Son of God or the disgusting, perverted views of Nestorius, which underlie them, these should be subject to the condemnation of this holy and ecumenical synod. A bishop clearly is to be stripped of his bishopric and **deposed**, a cleric to be **deposed** from the clergy...”13

Therefore, we see this principle applied by the Church when it dealt with early heresies, once again enforcing the idea that heretics are blocked from office, and that this has always been taught by the Church.

Pope Nicholas III

Later than Ephesus and the Fourth Lateran Council, but prior to the time of Pope Paul IV, pope Nicholas III published a constitution with similar statements against heretics:

> "Let your whole community know that **we excommunicate and anathematize all heretics:** the Cathars, the Patarenes, the Poor of Lyon, the Passaginians, the Josephites, the Arnoldists, the Speronists, and others by whatever names they may be called, having indeed different faces, but tails bound together, because they agree in the same vanity.
>
> § 1. Truly, those condemned by the Church shall be left to secular judgment, to be punished with the due punishment; **clerics first being degraded from their orders.**
> § 2. But if any of the aforesaid, after they have been detected, **should wish to return to do worthy penance, let them be thrust into perpetual prison.**"14

Therefore, we once again see that clerics are given specific mention as to be degraded. Also, "perpetual prison" is regarded as "worthy penance" for such heretics. This once again emphasises the Church's stance on the severity of heresy.

In sum, it is clear that the principle: *repentant heretics do not reclaim office* has been repeatedly taught by the Church's Magisterium, and that it has been repeatedly applied throughout history.

Note: we are aware that some historical cases are sometimes invoked in an attempt to refute the principle, but these cases will be dealt with elsewhere.15

iv) Upon repentance, heretics do not resume office because this is supported by theologians

In particular, this claim is clarified by St. Robert Bellarmine, Doctor of the Church, who gives this claim the support of multiple other Saints:

> "Finally, the Holy Fathers teach unanimously not only that heretics are outside of the Church, but also that they are "ipso facto" deprived of all ecclesiastical jurisdiction and dignity. St. Cyprian (lib. 2, epist. 6) says: "We affirm that absolutely no heretic or schismatic has any power or right"; and he also teaches (lib. 2, epist. 1) that **the heretics who return to the Church must be received as laymen, even though they have been formerly priests or bishops in the Church**."16

> "[I]t is proven with arguments from authority and from reason that the manifest heretic is ipso facto **deposed**. The argument from authority is based on St. Paul, who orders that the heretic be avoided after two warnings, that is, after showing himself to be **manifestly obstinate** – which means **before any excommunication or judicial sentence.**"17

Therefore, we see clearly that St. Bellarmine concludes with the support of Holy Fathers that heretics must return to the Church as laymen.

Now, one may argue that this is after two warnings, as is here mentioned. However, we have already demonstrated elsewhere that a warning is not strictly necessary because the purpose of a warning is to establish knowing pertinacity18 or, as St. Bellarmine states, to show that one is "manifestly obstinate", as theologian Cardinal John de Lugo states on the matter of heresy:

> "...in the external forum, **a previous admonition and reprimand is not always required to punish someone as heretical and pertinacious**; nor is such requirement always admitted in the practice of the Holy Office. For if it can be **ascertained in some other way**, given the defendant's qualities, **obvious doctrinal knowledge and other circumstances**, that he could not be unaware that his doctrine was opposed to the Church's, **by this**

> **very fact he will be considered a heretic…** The reason for this is clear, for external admonition can only serve to make the person in error become aware of the opposition existing between his error and the doctrine of the Church. **If he knows the subject much more through books and conciliar definitions than he could through the words of his admonisher, there is no reason to require another admonition for him to become pertinacious against the Church.**"19

One may then claim that warnings are required under Canon 2314:

> § 1. All apostates from the Christian faith and each and every heretic or schismatic…
> 2.° Unless they respect warnings, they are deprived of office… [if] clerics, **with the warning being repeated**, [they are] are deposed;
> 3.° If they give their names to non-Catholic sects or publicly adhere [to them], **they are by that fact infamous**, and with due regard for the prescription of Canon 188, n. 4, clerics, the previous **warnings having been useless**, are degraded.20

Therefore, we see two mentions of warnings. However, these warnings only apply when the heresy is not publicly manifest by a *public defection from the Catholic faith*. This is made explicit in Canon 2314 (1:3) which refers to Canon 188.4 (Any office becomes vacant… if a cleric…*Publicly defects from the Catholic faith*),21 and which also clearly states that public adherents to a non-Catholic sect are by that fact infamous – i.e. automatically infamous. Therefore, we should consider the canonical meaning of "infamy" (along with another term: "irregular"):

> "Those who have been branded with **infamy** by the law **are irregular**."22

And here is the definition of irregularity:

> "An **impediment** introduced by ecclesiastical law **preventing one from entering the clerical state**, or from the exercise of any orders."23

Therefore, according to Canon 2314 (1:3), a public adherent to a non-Catholic sect is *by that fact infamous,* therefore *irregular*, and therefore *prevented from becoming a cleric*. This happens *without* the need for a *warning* because the consequence is *automatic*.24

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In conclusion we can clearly see that *repentant heretics do not reclaim office*. This is not merely a penal rule, but a consistent principle; a consequence of heresy, as repeatedly argued for and applied throughout the millennia of Church history, as supported by Councils, Popes, Historical Practice, Theologians and Canon Law.

Therefore, we do not hold that the Novus Ordo clergy have occupied Catholic offices, but even if they did hold such offices, they would be automatically removed from such offices as a result of their heresy and would not be able to simply re-occupy such offices, even if they made a full conversion back to the Catholic faith.

1 Core Argument: Section 4: On the Question of Heresy
2 Additional Argument: Canon 2314, Excommunication and Non-Catholic Sects
3 Additional Argument: Canon 2314, Excommunication, and non-Catholic Sects
4 Code of Canon Law, 1917 Edition
5 Ibid.
6 Rev. Matthew Ramstein, Manual of Canon Law, 1947, pp.686-687 (emphasis added), this is also made explicit in Canon 2265: Code of Canon Law, 1917
7 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter XIII: On the Canonical Crime of Heresy, 4th Article, n.32-33, & 5th Article, n.34
8 Pope Paul IV, Cum Ex Apostolatus Officio, 1559 (emphasis added)
9 Rev. Matthew Ramstein, Manual of Canon Law, 1947, p.692
10 Ibid, 692-693 (emphasis added)
11 The Fourth Lateran Council, 1215, Constitutions: n.3 (emphasis added)
12 The Council of Ephesus, 431, Synodical Letter about the Expulsion of the Eastern Bishops (et al.) (emphasis added)

13 Ibid, Definition of the Faith at Nicaea (6th Session) (emphasis added)
14 Pope Nicholas III, Noverit Universitas (1280) (emphasis added) in: Bullarum Diplomatum et Privilegiorum Santorum Romanorum Pontificum : Taurinensis Editio, Vol IV,Augustae Taurinorum, 1857, p.47
15 Additional Arguments: Additional Historical Refutations
16 St. Robert Bellarmine, De Romano Pontifice, lib. II, cap. 30 (emphasis added)
17 Ibid (emphasis added)
18 See: Core Argument: 4. On the Question of Heresy
19 Cardinal John de Lugo, Disputationes, 2:disp. XX, sect. IV, no. 157-158. Also see: Antonius Diana, Resolutiones Morales (Venice: Franc. Baba, 1635), pars IV, tract. VII, resol. 36; Vermeersch, 3:245; Noldin, Compl. de Poenis Eccl., 21; Regatillo, 2:508
20 Code of Canon Law, 1917 Edition (emphasis added)
21 Ibid. (emphasis added)
22 Timothy Lincoln Bouscaren. Canon Law; A Text and Commentary, under: “Infamy at Law”, 1953, p.875 (emphasis added)
23 New Catholic Dictionary (Vatican Edition), 1929, p.491, see: “Irregularity”
24 We have already explained how the Novus Ordo clergy can be regarded as part of a non-Catholic sect: See: Additional Argument: Canon 2314, Excommunication and Non-Catholic Sects

Of the Novus Ordo Sect and Seven Refutations

We concluded in another section that the Novus Ordo church is a non-Catholic sect.1 This follows from the definition of a sect:

> “...any Christian denomination which has set itself up independently of [the Catholic] Church is a **sect**. According to Catholic teaching **any Christians who, banded together refuse to accept the entire doctrine** or to acknowledge the supreme authority of the Catholic Church, constitute merely a religious party under human unauthorized leadership.”2

Thesis advocates state repeatedly that the Novus Ordo church professes a new religion.3 Therefore, we conclude that the Novus Ordo church is a

non-Catholic sect because its members persistently refuse to accept the entirety of Catholic doctrine, and they are united by this fact as an organisation. Elsewhere, we have also alluded to the fact that this is particularly egregious for the clergy.4 Whilst laymen of various ranks and capacities might be excused pertinacity due to their ignorance, clergy do not enjoy the same excuse due to their training and formation. Therefore, we can at least conclude that the clerical hierarchy of the Novus Ordo church constitute a non-Catholic sect due to their continued refusal to accept Catholic doctrine and their persistent profession of a non-Catholic religion.

However, the Thesis advocates claim the following:

> "Those defending that the "Novus Ordo Church" is a non-Catholic sect, in the full canonical strength of the word, are faced with flagrant intrinsic contradictions.
> For according to this opinion, we would have to logically conclude:
>
> (1) That, either with the election of John XXIII or with the promulgation of Vatican II, the whole Catholic Church disappeared suddenly, entirely swallowed up in a false Church.
> (2) That at this point all Catholics were canonically part of this non-Catholic sect, in communion with and submitted to non-Catholics. This would mean that there were therefore no true Catholics left on earth.
> (3) That everyone leaving the "Novus Ordo" is leaving a non-Catholic sect, and must make an abjuration of error and a public profession of Catholic faith to be absolved from excommunication and be received again in the true Catholic Church by a priest who himself is not a member of the sect, or if he was, has himself abjured and was received into the Catholic Church.
> (4) That there would have been no clergy left (since all were part of this non-Catholic sect) to receive the "converts" in the true Catholic Church.
> (5) That the Catholic hierarchy would have entirely disappeared from the face of the earth, not only formally, but even materially.
> (6) That, consequently, the mark of apostolicity of the Catholic Church would have been lost.

(7) That those who defend this idea were themselves members of this non-Catholic sect, and have never been duly received into the Catholic Church. They would themselves be clergy to be shunned by “true Catholics”. Who would be these pure and true Catholics, though, no one knows.

These conclusions are utterly unacceptable, they are absurd, and some of them are openly incompatible with the Catholic faith.”5

We will now proceed to refute all seven of these claims…

(1): *...with the election of John XXIII or with the promulgation of Vatican II, the whole Catholic Church disappeared suddenly, entirely swallowed up in a false Church.*

Refutation (1): this would only apply if, with the promulgation of Vatican II, the *whole* Church accepted the doctrine of Vatican II and *promulgated* it. However, this is simply untrue on multiple counts. To begin with, not all bishops signed the Vatican II documents. This is demonstrably true from the simple fact that not all bishops were present at the Second Vatican Council. Therefore, there was not *necessarily* complete and *universal* consent to the teachings of Vatican II.

In brief, this claim would have to prove that at the time of Vatican II, there was universal adherence to its teaching amongst every Catholic Bishop, and this is both unproven and unprovable.

(2): *That at this point all Catholics were canonically part of this non-Catholic sect, in communion with and submitted to non-Catholics. This would mean that there were therefore no true Catholics left on earth.*

Refutation (2): Firstly, see: Refutation (1); also, *ignorance* of false doctrines does not make one a member of a sect by virtue of the fact that sects are defined by their shared adherence to a false belief. Therefore, if *any* Bishops were in ignorance of the changes of Vatican II and the formation of this new sect, such Bishops remained Catholic.

(3) *That everyone leaving the "Novus Ordo" is leaving a non-Catholic sect, and must make an abjuration of error…*

Refutation (3): If a given priest never endorsed the Novus Ordo religion and was never in submission to it, that priest was never part of the non-Catholic sect, and has never needed to make an abjuration. There are numerous priests who fit this description.

For priests and laymen who do not fit this description, abjuration is indeed required. After all:

> "[Abjuration is] in common ecclesiastical language… renunciation of heresy made by the penitent heretic on the occasion of his reconciliation with the Church."6

However, it can take multiple forms, with different ecclesiastical procedures, at different levels of severity. For example:

> "Arians were received into the Church in the West by the imposition of hands, in the East by unction… Monophysites... were treated with less severity, being admitted, with some others, upon a mere profession of the orthodox faith."7

Therefore, an abjuration is necessary but does not always require the same type of formal ceremony. It is the lack of this formal ceremony which is relevant to present practice.

It is worth noting that the vast majority of individuals who return to Catholicism after leaving the Novus Ordo sect are laymen, who often leave the Novus Ordo sect once they recognise it to be non-Catholic. That is to say, they are individuals who have lived their lives with the full intention of being Catholic, but have simply been in schism due to a prolonged state of confusion and poor formation. Therefore, their offence being mild, it is also fitting that the abjuration procedure is mild. For many Catholic priests it may suffice for them to hear that such individuals have made a sincere profession of faith, and have explicitly renounced their adherence to the Novus Ordo sect (perhaps in conversation or within the confessional, for example).

Whilst an abjuration is a Canonical requirement, it is an open question as to what, exact, procedure should be followed in our current situation for the various types of offences, ranging from accidental adherence to a sect due to pure ignorance, to knowing, clerical participation in the sect and active, public profession of its teachings.

However, that does bring us to recognise that Catholic priests might err on this question, and might even err frequently. There may be many situations for which a fully formal and public abjuration might be unnecessary. However, there may also be many situations in which such a formalised abjuration ought to be made (in particular, when clerics of the Novus Ordo sect renounce it), yet if this is not done, this may well be an error on the part of Catholics who do not require such an abjuration.

Nonetheless, the key point is this: that the lack of abjurations would *not* prove that the Novus Ordo church is not a non-Catholic sect. Instead, it would only prove that remaining Catholic clergy *ought* to be more prudent with the process of abjuration.

(4) That there would have been no clergy left (since all were part of this non-Catholic sect) to receive the "converts" in the true Catholic Church.

(5) That the Catholic hierarchy would have entirely disappeared from the face of the earth, not only formally, but even materially.

Refutation (4 & 5): See Refutations (1) & (2)

(6) That, consequently, the mark of apostolicity of the Catholic Church would have been lost.

Refutation (6): See Refutations (1) & (2)

Also, the mark of apostolicity is maintained so long as there are true Bishops with valid orders, who profess the true faith, and the Church retains the power of papal succession (election), which we have proven elsewhere.8

Finally, it is worth noting that the Thesis model itself destroys the marks of the Church because these four marks: Unity (Oneness), Holiness,

Catholicity, and Apostolicity must exist together – the true Church of Christ: The Catholic Church possess all four marks in unison. However, according to the Thesis model, the Novus Ordo sect professes a new religion, yet is the Catholic Church. Therefore, it lacks Unity (of faith) and Holiness. Therefore, by erroneously attempting to maintain that the Novus Ordo church is Apostolic, they must also conclude that the Catholic Church is *not* Unified or Holy.

(7) That those who defend this idea were themselves members of this non-Catholic sect, and have never been duly received into the Catholic Church.

Refutation (7): See Refutations (1) & (2) & (3).

___

Finally, there are two other rhetorical questions presented in another Thesis article, which we will also refute:

> (1) "[The] Novus Ordo Church, [is treated] as if it were a separate organisation from the Catholic Church. In that case, I ask: when did this separation take place? 1958? 1963? 1965? 1969?"9

Answer (1): The implied claim that we can only recognise the creation of a sect if we know the exact date of its creation is obviously fallacious and is not proposed anywhere in Catholic thought. After all, there is no official date for the creation of the most infamous non-Catholic sect: the so-called "Eastern Orthodox" church.10

> "(2) If there indeed is a legal separation between the Novus Ordo and the Catholic Church: **where is the Catholic hierarchy? Where is ordinary jurisdiction, or the ability to recover it?**"11

Answer (2): The Catholic hierarchy remains with the valid, Catholic Bishops who have valid ordinations and who profess the Catholic faith. Ordinary jurisdiction is enjoyed by no one at present, but the ability to recover it resides in the ability to elect a new pope, which has been explained elsewhere.12

1 Additional Argument: Canon 2314, Excommunication, and Non-Catholic Sects
2 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “Election of the Popes”, 1913 edition. (emphasis added)
3 As one example, see: thethesis.us (2025) under: Being Here: General Overview: 1st Article, n.5
4 Core Argument: 4. On the Question of Heresy
5 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter XIII: On the Canonical Crime of Heresy, 8th Article, n.62
6 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “Abjuration”, 1913 edition
7 Ibid.
8 See: Core Argument, Section 5 & Additional Arguments: On Jurisdiction and Apostolic Succession
9 Mr. Frankie Logue, A Refutation of the Arguments of the Clergy of St. Gertrude the Great Church, 2021, P.6
10 Particular milestones have been recognised such as the excommunication of Caerularius in 1054, but the overall schism was a general dispute that spanned centuries: Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “The Eastern Schism”, 1913 edition.
11 Mr. Frankie Logue, A Refutation of the Arguments of the Clergy of St. Gertrude the Great Church, 2021, P.6
12 See: Core Argument, Section 5 & Additional Arguments: On Jurisdiction and Apostolic Succession

Additional Historical Refutations

Throughout the Core Argument and collection of Additional Arguments, we have dealt with numerous issues that pertain to historical cases. Thesis advocates have presented historical cases throughout their work as proof of their position (or refutations of the counter-position). However, we have not been able to deal with all possible historical cases elsewhere. Therefore, the purpose of this current section is to serve as a compilation of additional refutations against historical cases presented in either direct or indirect support of the Thesis position. We do not expect this list to be exhaustive, but will endeavour to address the most pertinent cases raised.

“Pope-Elects” in Catholic History

In our Core Argument, we refuted the possibility of a “material” pope.1 This concept is also combined with the concept of a “pope-elect” within the Thesis argument. Thesis advocates claim that we have meaningfully seen “pope-elects” in history (according to their model). We have already refuted one such claim.2 Nonetheless, there are multiple other cases which may be posited, which we will here refute.

Before we proceed, let us remember what it means to prove the existence of a “pope-elect” as a “material” pope according the Thesis model:

In the sense relevant to the Thesis, a historical “pope-elect” (meaning a “material” pope) would be: *a man who has received an election, yet did not accept it, and during the long, indefinite interim between his election and acceptance (exceeding 8 days) he was not truly the pope (formally), but nonetheless retained the right of election and no other elections could be performed.3*

Therefore, the question is whether other historical cases of “pope-elects” fit this description.

1 See: Core Argument: 3. On the Impossibility of a “Material” pope
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid – for a full explanation of this description.

Pope Stephen II

Pope Stephen II might be presented as a “pope-elect” in the sense of a merely “material” Pope because he was elected, but died before he could receive his official consecration. Here is the entry on him from the Catholic Encyclopedia:

> “On the death of Zachary, a certain priest **Stephen was unanimously elected** to succeed him (about 23 March, 752); but on the third day after his election, whilst transacting some domestic affairs, he was struck with apoplexy, and expired on the next day. As **he died before his consecration**, earlier writers do not appear to have included him in the list of the popes; but, **in accordance with the long standing practice of the Roman Church, he is now**

> **generally counted among them.** This divergent practice has introduced confusion into the way of counting the popes Stephen."1

As we can see, he did indeed die before his consecration and therefore before his official, public acceptance of the Papacy. Therefore, Thesis advocates would claim that Pope Stephen II was never officially a "pope" but merely a "pope-elect". However, we see in this very same history that *he is counted amongst the list of popes*. And indeed, this is true, as he is included in the list of popes from the same encyclopedia, and his Papacy is listed as starting in 752.2

Therefore, we see that this case does not fit the Thesis description. Pope Stephen II did accept his election, but did not receive his official consecration. Nonetheless, his Pontificate is officially listed and there was no indefinite or extended interim during which he was *merely* a "pope-elect".3

1 Catholic Encyclopedia 1913, Pope Stephen II (emphasis added)
2 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: "List of Popes", 1913 edition. (emphasis added)
3 One interesting thing to note in this case is that he is listed on Wikipedia as being a "pope-elect", this entry states that he was officially listed as a pope until 1961(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/pope-elect_Stephen); that is to say, he was officially recognised until the reign of imposter-pope "John XXIII" and was only "removed" by the architects of the imposter-church... Of course, we do not recognise the legitimacy/reality of this so-called "removal" as the actions are the Vatican-II counter-church are irrelevant to the functions and activities of The Catholic Church.

"Pope-Elect" Celestine II (Teobaldo Boccadipecora)

This is an interesting case because Boccadipecora was indeed legitimately elected by the cardinals, yet does not appear on the official list of popes. Here is the account of his election, as given by the Catholic Encyclopedia:

> "The cardinals had already elected Cardinal Teobaldo Boccadipecora who had taken the name of Celestine II. He was clothed in the scarlet mantle of the pope, while the Te Deum was chanted in thanksgiving, when the proud and powerful Roberto Frangipani suddenly appeared on the scene, expressed his dissatisfaction with the election of Teobaldo and proclaimed the Cardinal of Ostia as pope. The intimidated cardinals reluctantly yielded to his demand. **To prevent a schism Teobaldo resigned his right to the tiara**."1

Immediately after, Lamberto Scannabecchi was elected as Pope Honorius II.2

As we can see, this is not a clear-cut case of a Papal election. It has all of the hallmarks of a contested election; that is, an election that is not fully accepted during which there are rival claimants, presenting dangers of confusion and schism. Boccadipecora himself recognised that schism was a present danger.

It is also worth noting that this election took place at a time when Cardinal elections had not been fully codified in the way that we understand them now. From the Catholic Encyclopedia:

> "Gregory VII (1073), however, was the last pope who asked for imperial confirmation. It will be seen that the decree of Pope Nicholas reserves the actual election to the cardinals, **but requires the assent (*laudatio*) of the lower clergy and laity.**
>
> The Tenth Ecumenical Synod (Lateran) in 1139 restricted, however, the entire choice to the cardinals, and in 1179, another Lateran Council under Alexander III made the rule that the pope is to be chosen by a two-thirds majority of the electors who are present."3

Therefore, at the time of this election, it was still practice to expect "the assent… **of the laity**". The election had produced the assent of the cardinals, but a prominent member of the laity was the one who actively blocked the election and called for the new-election, resulting in Pope Honorius II.

However, Boccadipecora is not listed as an antipope[4] (as Celestine II) which could be due to the fact that he did not oppose Honorius II.[5]

After these considerations, we could therefore posit at least 3 possibilities:

> a) Boccadipecora was indeed validly elected as Celestine II and became the pope, but his Papacy was not counted on official lists and his name was passed on in order to save confusion because his Pontificate was immediately contested by the election of Pope Honorius II.
>
> b) Boccadipecora received a valid election but did not receive the Papacy because he did not complete his consecration before the new election of Pope Honorius II.
>
> c) Boccadipecora's election was not ultimately valid (due to contestation and disagreement), and he was therefore never a pope.

Of these three possibilities, only (b) gives any kind of support to the Thesis model (and then only loosely) by suggesting that there might have been a man in history who received a valid election but did not become formally pope immediately upon acceptance (and therefore, perhaps, remained a "material" pope for the space of a few hours). However, even this argument does not work. It would still have to be admitted that Boccadipecora *accepted* the election. Thesis advocates argue that the "Vatican II popes" have remained "material" popes because they *have not accepted* an election. Therefore, this line of argument would require an insentience upon the claim that pope-elects remain "material popes" until the completion of a consecration. However, this is not congruent with the Thesis model, is against Canon Law, and is not supported by other historical instances in which Pontificates have started *before* consecration (i.e. the case of Pope Stephen II). Moreover, this is all assuming that possibility (b) applies in fact which is simply unproven by the historical case.

Of course, the other two possibilities do not support the Thesis model. There was no prolonged interim during which Boccadipecora was not truly (formally) the pope, yet retained the *sole right of election.*

In conclusion, the case of Boccadipecora is at best inconclusive, or simply non-proof of a “pope-elect” (according to the Thesis model).

1 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “Pope Honorius II”, 1913 edition. (emphasis added)
2 Ibid.
3 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “Papal Elections”, 1913 edition. (emphasis added)
4 In the Catholic Encyclopedia
5 Definition of an Antipope: “A false claimant of the Holy See in opposition to a pontiff canonically elected.” - Catholic Encyclopedia 1913, Antipope

Pope Adrian VI

Thesis advocates have at least alluded to the example of Pope Adrian VI because he is mentioned by Martin Bonacina, and Bonacina is quoted directly in Thesis works.1

The official records hold that both the commencement of his Pontificate and his election took place in 15222, and there is no suggestion that there was a delay between his election and the start of his Pontificate. Instead, he was not present on the date of his election: 9th January 1522 because he was in Spain, and Rome therefore awaited his confirmation. Therefore, there was a delay between his election and his coronation (January – August), but his Pontificate is recorded as having commenced in **January**.3

He did not received news of his election until February, but we must also remember that, despite the fact that there were far more than 8 days between the Cardinal election and Adrian VI’s acceptance4, Canon Law states:

Canon 175:

> “The election should be communicated quickly to the one elected, who must within at [most] **eight useful days from the reception of the information** make known whether he consents to the election or whether he refuses it.”5

However, *upon being informed of his election, Adrian VI immediately accepted:*

> "Adrian also showed imperturbable gravity when, **on the 9th of February**, Antonio de Studillo, as envoy of the Sacred College, **handed him the official announcement of his election.** He read the letter without remark, and then, in his dry manner, told Studillo, who was fatigued by the journey, to go and take some repose. On the same day he composed his answer to the College of Cardinals; in this he also reiterated his sense of unfitness for his new dignity and his willingness to have declined it; but, trusting in God, whose honour alone was his aim in all things, and also out of respect for the cardinals, **he acquiesced in his election.**"6

There is no indication that Adrian VI remained a quasi "pope-elect" until the time of his official, public acceptance and coronation in Rome. Nor was there an indefinite interim exceeding 8 days between his being informed of his election, and his acceptance of it.

Therefore, Pope Adrian VI does not constitute an example of a "pope-elect" according to the Thesis model.

1 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter X: On the Lack of Intention to Accept the Papacy, 2nd Article, n.12
2 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: "List of Popes", 1913 edition. (emphasis added)
Catholic Encyclopedia, see: "Pope Adrian VI", 1913 edition. (emphasis added)
3 https://www.vatican.va/content/vatican/en/holy-father/adriano-vi.html
4 Pastor F. Ludwig, The History of the Popes: From the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol 9, 1913, under: "Situation in Rome at the death of Leo X. Election of Adrian VI."
5 Code of Canon Law, 1917 Edition (emphasis added)
6 Pastor F. Ludwig, The History of the Popes: From the Close of the Middle Ages, Vol 9, 1913, under: "Situation in Rome at the death of Leo X. Election of Adrian VI." p.46 (emphasis added)

Apparent Historical Leniency

The Thesis advocates have an extended section in one of their works dedicated to historical cases in which Catholics professed error or heresy, and the Church appeared to deal with them leniently.1

The position of the argument we have presented here2 is that the Novus Ordo clergy are heretics and either never held Catholic office, have been removed from Catholic office, or cannot claim Catholic office as a result of such heresy. It is worth noting that this argument is made against heresy which is *public and pertinacious* and that we do not apply these claims to any individuals who merely err or whose heresy is private and occult. Moreover, we do not readily apply this principle to heresies which are difficult to discern – that is to say, heresies on refined matters of doctrine which are not readily understood by all. Instead, we posit that the weight of the argument comes from the fact that the Novus Ordo religion contradicts the Catholic faith *on elementary points of Catholic doctrine, easily known by all.* It is for this reason that we appeal to the likes of Cardinal De Lugo who claims that warnings are not required to establish pertinacity if it is clear that *the individual should know better on account of their learning.*3

Therefore, we argue that heretics never hold, or are removed from, or cannot claim Catholic office, and **a heretic is here defined as**: *an individual who publicly and pertinaciously denies or doubts something to be believed from the truth of divine and Catholic faith*4; *that is to say, a Catholic doctrine on faith and morals* (this does not include errors about ecclesiastical rules).

The Thesis advocates argue that such individuals are not removed or barred from office because they claim that various historical instances show that the Church did not apply this principle. We will here review these instances, and see if they are true refutations.

1 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter XIII: On the Canonical Crime of Heresy, 7thArticle
2 Particularly in: Core Argument: 4. On the Question of Heresy, and Additional Argument: Repentant Heretics do not Reclaim Office

3 Cardinal John de Lugo, Disputationes, 2:disp. XX, sect. IV, no. 157-158. Also see: Antonius Diana, Resolutiones Morales (Venice: Franc. Baba, 1635), pars IV, tract. VII, resol. 36; Vermeersch, 3:245; Noldin, Compl. de Poenis Eccl., 21; Regatillo, 2:508
4 Canon 1325: "§ 2. After the reception of baptism, if anyone, retaining the name Christian, pertinaciously denies or doubts something to be believed from the truth of divine and Catholic faith, [such a one is] a heretic…", Code of Canon Law, 1917

Nestorius

Here is the presentation of the case by the Thesis advocates:

> "Nestorius was archbishop of Constantinople in the fifth century. In 428 he openly and publicly defended the heresy that Mary was not the Mother of God. He was very pertinacious about it, and tried by all means to entice clergy and people to accept his heresy. The Catholic clergy fled him, saying "An emperor we have, but no bishop." For it was clear to them that a bishop pertinaciously teaching heresy to his flock was a wolf, and no shepherd. Nonetheless, it was not until 431, in the Council of Ephesus, that he was officially declared a heretic and deposed from his see. At that council, up until the moment of his condemnation, he was addressed as "Your Reverence" and given other formalities of honor...
> ...Most of the clergy and the people had effectively broken communion with Nestorius. Nonetheless, an official and authoritative recognition of his heresy was still necessary to provide for a lawful succession to his see."1

Therefore, the claim is that, despite being a public and pertinacious heretic, Nestorius did not lose his office *until* an official declaration was made, not by the very fact of his heresy.

This case presents two points of confusion which are common throughout the rest of the examples:

First, the difference between being **removed** from the **legitimate function** of a Catholic office, and **losing** all of the **external additions** to that office. i.e. once deposed, a cleric immediately loses the office – they

do not exercise any legitimate authority. Nonetheless, after a deposition, a period of time might elapse during which the cleric still lives within the relevant building, receives funding, is called by a particular title, and so on. However, if the laity of a given area proceed to call their local Bishop, "Bishop" even if he has been automatically and Divinely excommunicated by their public heresy, that could be because they have *not yet received official confirmation* that he is no longer their Bishop, *not* because he really is their Bishop until such a confirmation.

This also helps us to clarify the purpose of a public declaration, even in the case of automatic excommunications; in such cases, the declaration is made in order to make the deposition explicit before the whole Church in order to avoid confusion. However, this does *not* mean that such a declaration *causes* the excommunication itself (which has already happened automatically). Thus, we see this in the words of Pope Celestine:

> "Nevertheless, lest the opinion of one **who had already called down upon himself a divine judicial sentence** seem valid even at the time, the authority of our See has decreed that, **from the moment that Nestorius and those like him begin to proclaim such [heresy]**, We do not regard as exiled or excommunicated any of the bishops or clerics or Christians by any profession who were dispossessed of office or cast out of communion by him and his followers. **Rather all were and still remain in communion with Us, because a person who erroneously preached such [heresy] could not eject or remove anyone.**"2

Therefore, we see the explicit statement that Nestorius *called down a divine sentence upon hims*elf by preaching his heresy, and thus was immediately deposed of office. This is further confirmed by the fact that his authority was *immediately void* – which is why those who Nestorius himself "removed" were never counted as removed by the Church (and thus, never needed to *return* to the Church).

Cardinal Louis Billot confirms this, by stating:

> "...distinctly and expressly we are informed that a bishop by reason of heresy does not **lose his own power of binding and loosing,**

> **except when he preaches heresy and openly professes it.** In this regard, among other documents, there is extant the letter of Pope Celestine to the clergy and people of Constantinople **in the case of Nestorius...**”3

Therefore, aside from supporting the Thesis position, the case of Nestorius does the exact opposite. Upon further inspection, it is a case which confirms that clerics “lose the power of binding and loosing” (are excommunicated) immediately upon their public, notorious, profession of heresy.

1 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter XIII: On the Canonical Crime of Heresy, 7thArticle, n.51
2 Pope Celestine, Epistle 14, n. 7, Migne, Patrologia Latina, vol. 50 (emphasis added)
3 Cardinal Louis Billot, Tractatus de Ecclesia Christi, 3rd ed, 1909, Thesis XI, Q. 7; pp. 300-301 (emphasis added)

Erasmus of Rotterdam

Here is the presentation of the case by the Thesis advocates:

> “Praised by the world as one of the most illustrious scholars of the Renaissance, Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469-1536) has also been accused by many of defending heresy. St. Alphonsus Liguori explains:
>
> > Albert Pico, Prince of Carpi, a man of great learning, and a strenuous opponent of the errors of Erasmus, assures us that he called the Invocation of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints idolatry; condemned Monasteries, and ridiculed the Religious, calling them actors and cheats, and condemned their vows and rules; was opposed to the celibacy of the clergy, and turned into mockery papal indulgences, relics of saints, feasts and fasts, auricular confession; asserts that by faith alone man is justified, and even throws a doubt on the authority of the Scripture and Councils.1

> It is not surprising, then, that Erasmus is recognized by many as a precursor of Luther. Yet, Erasmus never actually left the Church, and died a Catholic, according to St. Alphonsus:
>
> > He was, however, esteemed by several popes, who invited him to Rome, to write against Luther, and it was even reported that Paul III intended him for the Cardinalship. We may conclude with Bernini that **he died with the character of an unsound Catholic, but not a heretic**, as he submitted his writings to the judgment of the Church.2"3

Therefore, the claim is that Erasmus was never excommunicated, despite his errors and heresies.

However, the Thesis advocates make a claim which does not follow from their argument: "**Erasmus never actually left the Church…**" This does not follow because the claim is that Erasmus *died* as a Catholic, not that he was continuously Catholic until his death… after all, it is also possible that Erasmus left the Church (perhaps multiple times) and was continuously reconciled by a continuous submission and re-submission to the teaching authority of the Church. Therefore, it is perfectly possible that Erasmus *did* leave the Church (was excommunicated) automatically on account of his public heresy, but this was remedied by reconciliation, even repeated reconciliation, and that he was Catholic at the time of his death.

The fact that he found favour with other Catholics, including popes, proves nothing. After all, as fallible individuals, popes can be deceived. It is perfectly possible that in his duplicity, Erasmus was able to maintain the visage of a consistent, sound Catholic in the eyes of many, whilst spreading heresies that later became more evident from a broader perspective, including the perspective of later historians. After all, his work which we now recognise as one of his most scathing and anti Catholic ("The Praise of Folly") was only written for *private* circulation.4 Moreover, Erasmus may have gained favour in the eyes of Rome due to his public resistance to Luther, thus making him appear as a valuable defender of Catholicism.5 If such popes felt an increasing need to find allies in the intellectual war against Luther, is it at once regrettable – yet perfectly human – for this to blind them to the faults

of such allies. As such, Erasmus may not have only been one of the prototypical modernists, but a prototypical *infiltrator* of the Church; a man who flatters Catholicism externally, yet denigrates it occultly. Whatever the case may be, the objective fact is that Erasmus did not hold any Catholic office at the time of his death.

1 Citation given: St. Alphonsus of Liguori, The History of Heresies, Ch. XI, Dublin, 1847.
2 Citation given: Ibid
3 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter XIII: On the Canonical Crime of Heresy, 7thArticle, n.52 (emphasis added)
4 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “Desiderius Erasmus”, 1913 edition.
5 Ibid.

The Four Gallican Articles

Here is the presentation of the case by the Thesis advocates:

> “Let us mention the gallican declaration of the Four Articles, by the French clergy in 1682. This declaration stated the following: (1) the pope has supreme spiritual but no secular power; (2) the pope is subject to ecumenical councils; (3) the pope must accept as inviolable immemorial customs of the French Church, such as the right of secular rulers to appoint bishops or use revenues of vacant bishoprics; (4) papal infallibility in doctrinal matters presupposes confirmation by the whole Church.
>
> These four articles are contradicting the Catholic faith in a very serious way, needless to say. Yet, the French bishops were never declared to be notorious heretics, and were not deposed from their episcopal sees. The pope followed a path of patient diplomacy to remedy the situation, fearing that severity would lead the entire Church of France into open schism. This infamous declaration was drafted and defended by none other than Bossuet, one of the most illustrious French ecclesiastics of history.”1

Before examining this case, it is worth reviewing the different grades of Catholic dogma. Eminent theologian Ludwig Ott in his landmark work on Catholic doctrine writes:

> "§ 8. The Theological Grades of Certainty
>
> I. The highest degree of certainty appertains to the immediately revealed truths. The belief due to them is based on the authority of God Revealing (fides divina), and if the Church, through its teaching, vouches for the fact that a truth is contained in Revelation, one's certainty is then also based on the authority of the Infallible Teaching Authority of the Church (fides catholica). **If Truths are defined by a solemn judgment of faith (definition) of the Pope or of a General Council,** they are "**de fide** definita."
>
> 2. Catholic truths or Church doctrines, on which **the infallible Teaching Authority of the Church has finally decided**, are to be accepted with a faith which is based on the sole authority of the Church (fides ecclesiastica). These truths are as infallibly certain as dogmas proper."2

Ott later writes:

> "A Heretical Proposition (propositio haeretica)... signifies that the proposition **is opposed to a formal dogma**."3

Also, we read in the Catholic Encyclopedia:

> "A proposition is branded heretical when it goes directly and immediately against a revealed or defined dogma, or dogma *de fide*."4

Therefore, heretical statements, properly so-called, are those that contradict **defined** (formal), Catholic dogma. It is worth noting that other errors can still be sins against faith and authority to various types, but are not heresy strictly speaking.5

Hence, this is all pertinent to the question of the Gallican Articles because whilst these articles did indeed contradict Catholic teaching, *they did not contradict established Catholic dogma of their times;* that is to say, the scope and depth of the pope's power had not yet been fully defined by the Church.

Indeed, such definitions were made in response to the Gallican Articles, the first of which was eight years later: Pope Alexander III's constitution *Inter Multiplices*, released in **1690**.6

A full, and more general declaration was not made against such errors until more than one hundred years later, at the First Vatican Council.7

That is to say, whilst the errors of the Gallican Articles were indeed true errors and contestations against Catholic dogma, these contests were made in a time prior to their explicit definitions; that is to say, before the matter was fully "settled". Therefore, it does not follow that the relevant clergy were *pertinacious* heretics; that is, clerics with full knowledge of their heresy, rejecting widely known, defined doctrines of the Church. Instead, they were clerics in serious error, which would become clear heresy after the Church's various definitions.

That is also why this example does not apply to our current situation. The documents of the Second Vatican Council, and the practice of this new sect defy dogmatic articles of faith which were defined *before* the council. To take just one example (**from many**), we read in the Vatican II document, *Nostra Aetate*:

> "The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth."8

This single statement contradicts multiple, defined dogmas which were defined *long before* the council:

- There is only One God (*De fide*)9
- The One God is, in the ontological sense, The True God. (*De fide.*)10
- In God there are three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost… (*De fide*.)11
- All that exists outside God was, in its whole substance, produced out of nothing by God. (*De fide*.)12

Therefore, this single statement contradicts (*at least*) these four, defined dogmas because it states that the Muslims (*qua* Muslims)13 "adore"14,

"***the*** one God… **Creator** of heaven and earth." This therefore equates the Muslim "god" with the One, True Catholic God, despite the fact that the Muslims do not recognise the Blessed Trinity. Thus, the statement is directly contrary to the four *De fide* dogmas listed above.

Moreover, this heresy has been recognised, expressed, and practised by the Novus Ordo hierarchy; that is to say, including the "popes", which therefore cements the Novus Ordo interpretation of its documents as supporting and endorsing this heresy.15

Therefore, the case of the Four Gallican Articles is substantially different from our current situation. The Bishops of that time were openly stating an error, yet the relevant dogmas had not yet been explicitly defined by the Church. Therefore, it was not immediately, externally manifest that such clerics were *pertinacious* heretics. In our times, the Novus Ordo clergy openly teach and act against dogmas which have been defined and uncontested for many centuries.

A final thing to note is that, although the clerics were not automatically excommunicated and deposed due to the difference between heresy and error, they were nonetheless *immediately suspended* from being elected to bishoprics,16 thus showing that even in this case of error, the reaction of the Church was to suspend and delay clerical appointment.

1 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter XIII: On the Canonical Crime of Heresy, 7thArticle, n.53
2 Luwig Ott, The Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, 1954, Patrick Lynch Translation, p.9 (emphasis added)
3 Ibid, p.10 (emphasis added)
4 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: "Theological Censures", 1913 edition.
5 Ibid, pp.9-10 & Catholic Encyclopedia, see: "Heresy", 1913 edition.
6 See: Denzinger: Sources of Catholic Dogma, n.1322-1325 (old numbering)
7 See: Luwig Ott, The Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, 1954, Patrick Lynch Translation, pp.282- 286
8 (Proclaimed by "Paul VI": Nostra Aetate, 1965, n.3
9 Luwig Ott, The Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, 1954, Patrick Lynch Translation, p.32
10 Ibid, p.33

11 Ibid, p.52
12 Ibid, p.79
13 That is to say, insofar as they are adherents to the Muslim religion of Islam, not merely as individuals.
14 Latin “adorant” which can also mean “worship”, “honour”, or “pray to”
15 Examples abound and are too numerous to list here. We assume that our audience is already familiar with such matters. For those who remain curious, they can look at the various, public endorsements of Islam by the “Vatican II popes” – particularly “Francis”, “Benedict XVI”, and “John Paul II”; as well as permission and encouragement for laity and clergy to pray in communion with this false religion, and Muslim worship welcomed into Catholic buildings.
16 “Pope Innocent XI testified his displeasure by the Rescript of 11 April, 1682, in which he voided and annulled all that the assembly had done in regard to the regale, as well as all the consequences of that action; he also refused Bulls to all members of the assembly who were proposed for vacant bishoprics.” Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “Gallicanism”, 1913 edition. (emphasis added)

Jansenist Bishops in France

Here is the presentation of the case by the Thesis advocates:

> “Cardinal Billot addresses a number of cases, while discussing the principle presented above. One of them is the open rejection of the bull *Unigenitus* by Jansenist bishops, who were still recognized as legitimate bishops, in communion with the Holy See.
>
> The eminent Cardinal explains (*op. cit.*, pp. 296-297) that the Jansenists were very crafty in their rejection of the bull issued by Pope Clement XI in 1713, for they would claim that it was not infallible, and not to be followed as a rule of faith. They still professed submission to the magisterium of the Church as the rule of faith, and claimed to be Catholics. It is only after the bull had been accepted in the whole Church as the rule of faith, and after the pope required submission to the bull as a criterion of catholicity, that Jansenist bishops who would still refuse to submit themselves to the judgment of the Holy See would be deposed.

> The analogy with the current situation is evident: many bishops, who signed the erroneous documents of Vatican II can easily claim to be submitted to the Church's magisterium, to not see any rejection of Catholic dogma in Vatican II, and still claim to be Catholic. From that point of view alone, therefore, one could hardly argue that all the bishops who have signed the Vatican II documents would become, by that very fact, notorious heretics, deposed of their episcopal sees. This argument is thus proven wrong by history."1

There are a number of things to address within this argument.

Firstly, it does not directly apply to our argument. The conclusion of the Thesis advocates is that: "...one could hardly argue that all the bishops who have signed the Vatican II documents would become, by that very fact, notorious heretics, deposed of their episcopal sees."2 However, this is ambiguous because there is an important difference between *all* and *some*, both with regards to the Bishops at Vatican II and the documents they signed. After, not *all* of the Bishops signed *all* of the documents (nor were all Catholic Bishops present at the Council). Even of those Bishops who did, not all of them signed all of the documents. Therefore, given that only *some* of the documents contained explicit heresies, whilst the heresies of others were more obscure it does indeed follow that we ought not conclude that all Bishops automatically incurred automatic deposition at the time of Vatican II.

However, the Thesis argument applies to the present, as does the focus of our argument, and when we apply this to the present, we are now in a time when *the Vatican II documents have been systematically interpreted and applied for multiple decades, revealing their heresies not only in doctrine, but also in practice.* Therefore, the "Vatican II popes and Bishops" are in a significantly different context to those at the time of the Council itself. Despite the fact that a new religion (and therefore a new sect) was founded at the time of Vatican II, it was far more difficult to conclude public pertinacity, given that the principles of the Council had not yet been implemented. **Such ignorance no longer applies.** Therefore, the conclusion above given by the Thesis advocates does not apply to our argument.

Secondly, this once again goes back to the difference between an official declaration of excommunication and the excommunication itself. We read that the pertinacious Jansenists were given a *declaration of excommunication* in 1718, but it does not follow that this only took effect in 1718 – it is still possible that it took effect at the time of the public heresy (between 1713-1718). Indeed, we see this relationship between declaration and effect stated explicitly in Canon Law:

Canon 2232:

> "§ 2. A declaratory sentence makes the penalty retroactive to the moment of committing the delict."3

Therefore, according to Canon Law, the sentence in 1718 would have simply confirmed that the excommunication of the bishops had applied since 1713. Moreover, we read:

Canon 2266:

> "After a condemnatory or declaratory sentence, one excommunicated **remains deprived** of the fruits of dignity, office, benefice, pension…"4

The use of the word *remains*5 clearly indicates that the excommunication does not begin at the time of the declaration, but it continues through the declaration, *having started before.*

Therefore, we can conclude from these points that the case of the Jansenist Bishops does not ultimately support the position of the Thesis advocates. It does not prove that excommunications only apply at the moment of official declaration, nor does the comparison apply to the modern Novus Ordo clergy whose heretical sect has publicly and pertinaciously practised its non-Catholic religion for multiple decades.

1 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter XIII: On the Canonical Crime of Heresy, 7thArticle, n.54
2 Ibid, n.54
3 Code of Canon Law, 1917
4 Ibid. (emphasis added)

5 Latin “manet”

Scipione De Ricci and the Synod of Pistoia

Here is the presentation of the case by the Thesis advocates:

> “The synod of Pistoia was a diocesan synod held in 1786 by Scipione De Ricci, bishop of Pistoia and Prato. This synod was a bold attempt to secure recognition of Jansenist and Gallican doctrines in Italy. It taught many serious errors and heresies, in doctrine, discipline, and liturgy, many of which bear a striking resemblance with Vatican II. Faced with growing unpopularity, Scipione De Ricci decided to resign from his episcopal see in 1791. The synod of Pistoia was later condemned in a very detailed fashion by Pope Pius VI’s bull Auctorem Fidei of 1794. Scipione De Ricci signed a formula of submission to Pope Pius VII in 1805.
>
> Officially, therefore, Scipione De Ricci never left the Church, and never ceased to be considered a Catholic, although he publicly adhered to objectively heretical doctrines. He was never declared deposed for his errors, and between 1786 and 1791 he was in fact still functioning as the Catholic bishop of the diocese of Pistoia.”1

One point of distinction discredits this case: the Thesis advocates claim that the synod and its propositions were “objectively heretical”... however, here how the Catholic Encyclopedia frames the matter:

> “Pius VI commissioned four bishops, assisted by theologians of the secular clergy, to examine the Pistorian enactments, and deputed a congregation of cardinals and bishops to pass judgment on them. They condemned the synod and stigmatized eighty-five of its propositions as **erroneous** and **dangerous**.”2

Notice, therefore, that the official investigation of the Synod concluded its teachings to be “erroneous” and “dangerous” but not explicitly “*heretical*”. Also, whilst the Thesis advocates claim that “This synod was a bold attempt to secure recognition of Jansenist and Gallican doctrines in Italy.”

There is no indication that the synod proposed the Gallican doctrines which were *specifically* condemned in 1690 3. This was a time of dispute which would lead to further Ex Cathedra definitions in 1794 4, and later still at the First Vatican Council.5

Therefore, we can once again conclude that this does not provide an example of public, pertinacious heresy, but of serious public error.

1 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter XIII: On the Canonical Crime of Heresy, 7thArticle, n.55
2 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “Synod of Pistoia”, 1913 edition.
3 In the Papal Bull of Pope Alexander III: Inter Multiplices, 1690
4 In the Papal Bull of Pope Pius VI: Actorem Fidei, 1794
5 See: Ludwig Ott, The Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma, 1954, Patrick Lynch Translation, pp.282- 286

Martin Luther

Whilst not given in detail, the case of Martin Luther is mentioned briefly by the Thesis advocates, who imply that it is another case of leniency in which a public heretic was not automatically excommunicated.1

The natural date at which to claim his public heresy began was on 31st October, 1517 when he publicly shared his infamous ninety-five theses.2

His heresies were formally condemned by the Papal Bull *Exsurge Domine* of 1520, and he was:

> “...summoned… to recant within sixty days **or receive the full penalty of ecclesiastical punishment.**”3

(after which he was formally excommunicated).

Note that we read “receive the *full* penalty…” and in the case of Nestorius we already reviewed the fact that the penalty of excommunication can have differing degrees of effects. Aside from the automatic effect removing an individual from the Church, there are also external, penal effects that can remove other elements such as titles.

Therefore, it does not follow in the case of Luther that he was only excommunicated after such formal declarations. Instead, he was automatically excommunicated at the moment of his public profession of heresy. The full penalty of excommunication applying to all externals was later declared formally, but even so, this means that the excommunication applied to the time of the heresy itself, because:

Canon 2232:

> "§ 2. A declaratory sentence makes the penalty retroactive to the moment of committing the delict."4

1 thethesis.us (2025) Chapter XIII: On the Canonical Crime of Heresy, 7thArticle, n.55
2 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: "Martin Luther", 1913 edition.
3 Ibid.
4 Code of Canon Law, 1917

Bishop Stephen Gardiner

The case of Bishop Gardiner is not found in the body of the Thesis work, but we are aware that it might be employed by Thesis advocates. In any case, it is worth addressing briefly here because there are principles within the case which apply more broadly.

Bishop Gardiner was in England under the rule of Henry VIII during the time of Anglican schism. During this time, he published erroneous or heretical works; i.e. denouncing papal power.1

Nonetheless, Bishop Gardiner remained a Bishop.

However, it must be duly noted that Bishop Gardiner was performing these actions under circumstances in which adherence to Roman Catholicism could result in violent pain of death.2

In the Catholic Encyclopedia, we read this principle about coercion, specifically violence:

> "It is apparent that in so far as coercion is irresistible, **the agent is not responsible for the external act resulting.** Volition, and consequently imputability, proceeds from an internal principle; violence from without. Violence that is not absolute may be weakened or overcome by resistance: the more vehement it is, the more is our freedom limited."3

Also, in the Code of Canon Law:

Canon 103:

> "§ 1. Acts placed by physical or moral persons **in virtue of extrinsic force** that cannot be resisted are considered **invalid**."4

It is therefore unsurprising that Bishop Gardiner kept his office and was readily allowed to proceed his functions once England had a Catholic Queen.5 If heresy, even public heresy, is performed under threat of violence, this reduces and even nullifies the culpability of the person. Therefore, we could perhaps argue that the actions of such persons fall short of the perfection of the Martyrs, but we leave such a judgement to God. According to Church Law and moral principle, we are to recognise that the threat of violence reduces responsibility, therefore pertinacity, and therefore heresy.

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In sum, we see from these various examples of apparent historical leniency that they do not confirm the Thesis position, nor do they refute our various counter-arguments. Particular nuances of these cases or misapplication of principles show that they mistake a formal declaration for the reality of an automatic excommunication, that they appeal to the removal of non-clerics, they misattribute historical heresy for error, and so on…

Therefore, we conclude that all such historical cases are either found to be clearly refuted or are simply inconclusive. Whilst we have not refuted every such case that the Thesis advocates might present, we nonetheless have confidence that other cases will ultimately prove false after a closer examination of the interpretations made by the Thesis

advocates as compared with the histories themselves, and by a further application of similar principles.

1 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “Stephen Gardiner”, 1913 edition.
2 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “The Reformation”, 1913 edition.
3 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “Violence”, 1913 edition. (emphasis added)
4 Code of Canon Law, 1917 (emphasis added)
5 Catholic Encyclopedia, see: “Stephen Gardiner”, 1913 edition.